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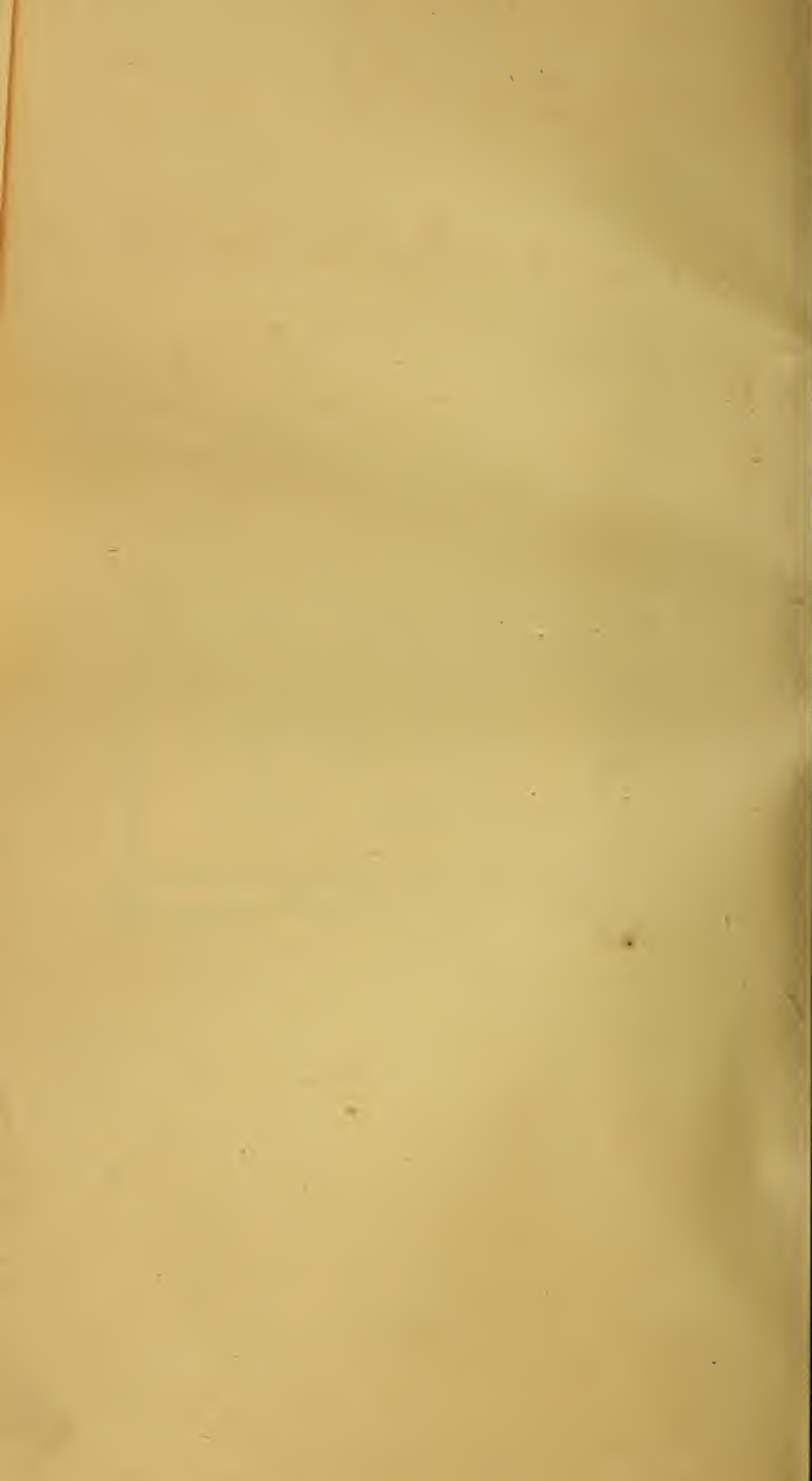
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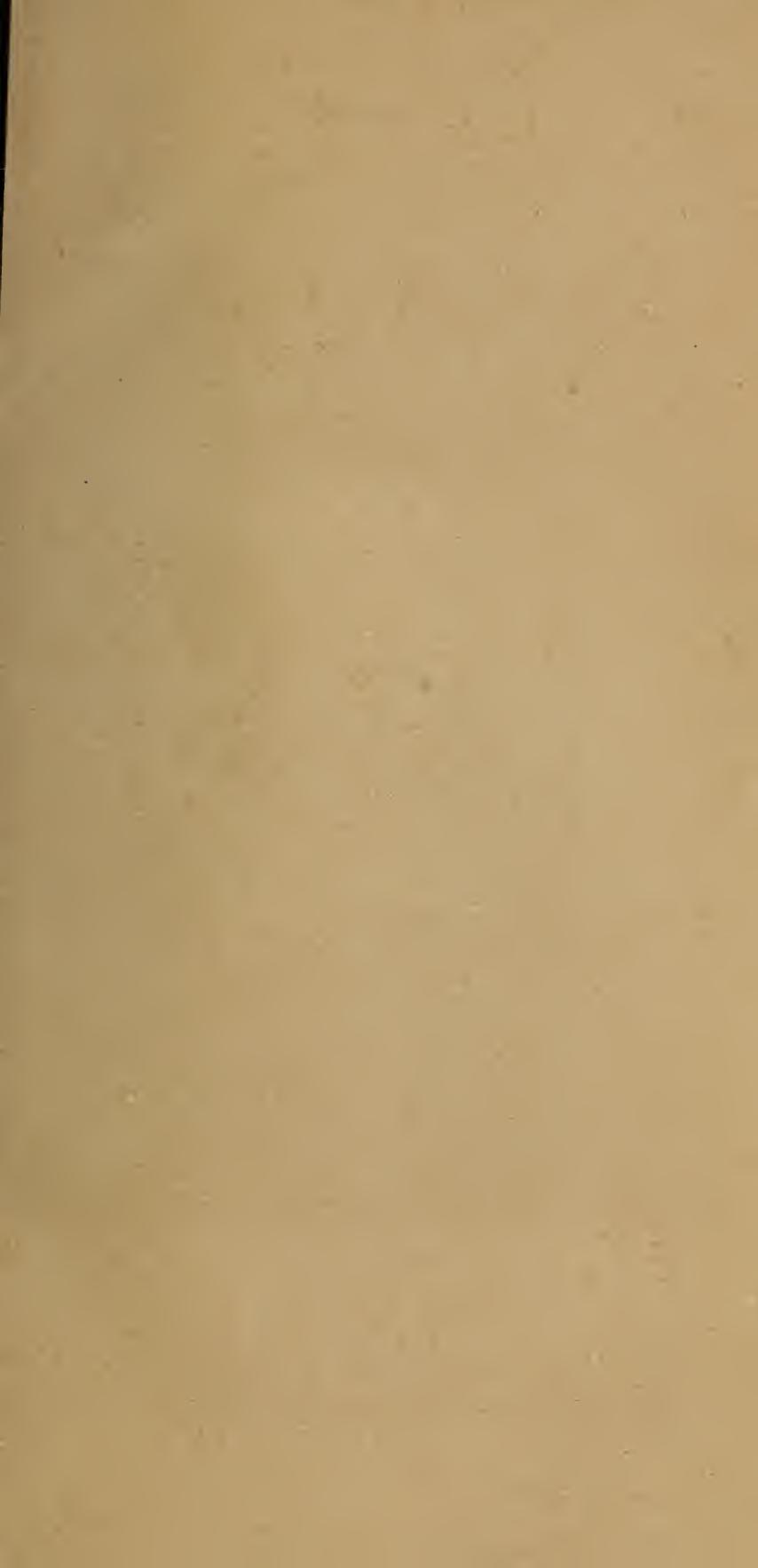
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RICHARD BAXTER.

THE
SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST;

OR

A TREATISE

ON THE

BLESSED STATE OF THE SAINTS
IN HEAVEN.

BY RICHARD BAXTER.

ABRIDGED FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION



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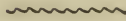
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PREFACE.



“THE Saints’ Everlasting Rest” was written by the author during a season of protracted bodily illness, and in its original form was a quarto volume of considerable size. After it had gone through a number of editions in this form, it was abridged in 1759, by the Rev. Benjamin Fawcett, and since that period, the abridgment has entirely superseded the original work. A literal reprint of the work, as left by its distinguished author, would not, on many accounts, be desirable; and particularly for the reason that it would find few readers. It is verbose, repetitious and loosely written, faults of which the author himself became aware: and hence the abridgment by Fawcett, of which numerous editions have been published, was a real blessing to the world.

When the Presbyterian Board of Publication had resolved to place this work on their catalogue, it was determined to present an abridg-

Sabbath and of Canaan, should teach them to look for a further rest, as the consummation of their happiness. My text is his conclusion after various arguments to that end; a conclusion so useful to a believer, as containing the ground of all his comforts, the end of all his duty and sufferings, the life and sum of all gospel promises and Christian privileges, that you may easily be satisfied why I have made it the subject of my present discourse.

Though the sense of the text includes in the word Rest, all that ease and safety which a soul, wearied with the burden of sin and suffering, and pursued by law and conscience, has with Christ in this life; yet because it chiefly intends the rest of eternal glory, I shall confine my discourse to this last.

There are some things which this Rest pre-supposes; and, before proceeding farther, it may not be improper briefly to notice them.

1. A person in motion, seeking rest. This is man here on earth; angels and glorified spirits have it already; and the devils and damned are past hope.

2. An end toward which he moves for rest; which end must be sufficient for his rest, else when it is obtained, it deceives him. This can be only God, the chief good. He that takes any thing else for his happiness, is out of his way, the very first step. The principal damning sin is, to make any thing besides God our end or rest. And the first true saving act, is, to choose God only for our end and happiness.

3. A distance is pre-supposed from this end, else there can be no motion towards it. This sad distance is the woful case of all mankind since the fall. It was our God that we principally lost, while we were shut out from his gracious presence. When Christ comes with regenerating, saving grace, he finds no man sitting still, but all posting on to eternal ruin, and making haste towards hell; till, by conviction, he first bring them to a stand, and, by conversion, turn first their hearts, and then their lives, sincerely to himself.

4. Here is pre-supposed, not only a distance from this rest, but also the knowledge of that distance. If

a man have lost his way, and know it not, he seeks not to return: if he lose his gold, and know it not, he seeks it not. Therefore they that never knew they were without God, never yet enjoyed him; and they that never knew they were in the way to hell, did never yet know the way to heaven. Nay, there will not only be a knowledge of this distance, and lost estate, but also affections corresponding to this. Can a man be brought to find himself on the very brink of hell, and not tremble? Or to find he has lost God and his soul, and not cry out, I am undone? The reason why so few obtain this rest is, they will not be convinced or made sensible that they are, in point of title, distant from it, and, in point of practice, contrary to it.

5. Here is also pre-supposed a superior moving cause, and an influence therefrom, else we should all stand still, and would no more move a step forward toward our rest, than the inferior wheels in a watch would stir, if you take away the spring, or the first mover. This first mover is God. The case is clear in good actions; if God move us not, we cannot move. Take heed of being estranged or separated from God, or of slacking your daily expectations of renewed help, or of growing insensible of the necessity of the continual influence and assistance of the Spirit. When you once begin to depend on your own understanding or resolution, for duty and holy walking, you are then in a dangerous declining state. In every duty remember Christ's words, "Without me ye can do nothing:" and those of Paul, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."

6. Here is pre-supposed an internal principle of life in the person moving. God moves not man like a stone, but by enduing him first with life, not to enable him to move without God, but to qualify him to move himself, in subordination to God the first mover.

7. Here is pre-supposed before rest, an actual motion. Rest is the end of motion: no motion, no rest. Chris.

tianity is not a sedentary profession and employment ; nor does it consist in mere negatives. Not doing good, is not the least evil. Sitting still will lose you heaven, as well as if you run from it. I know that "when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants ;" and that he cannot be a Christian who relies upon the supposed merit of his works ; but yet, he that hides his talent, shall receive the wages of a slothful servant.

8. Here is pre-supposed not only motion, but such motion as is rightly ordered and directed toward the end. It is not all motion, labour, seeking, that brings to rest ; every way leads not to this end ; but he whose goodness has appointed the end, has in his wisdom, and by his sovereign authority, appointed the way. O the pains that sinners take, and worldlings take, but not for this rest ! O the pains and cost that many an ignorant and superstitious soul is at for this rest, but all in vain ! How many "have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge ! Who being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God ;" nor known, "that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The truth is, Christ is the only way to the Father ; yet faith is the way to Christ ; and gospel obedience, or faith and works, the way for those to walk in, that are in Christ.

9. Here is pre-supposed not only motion rightly ordered, but strong and constant motion, which may reach the end. If there be not strength put to the bow, the arrow will not reach the mark. They that have been most holy, watchful, painful to get faith and assurance, do find, when they come to die, all too little. We daily see the best Christians when dying, repent their negligence ; but I never knew any then repent their diligence and holiness. An easy, dull profession of religion which encounters no difficulties and takes no pains, is a sad sign of an unsound heart. If the way to heaven be not far harder than the world imagines, then Christ and his apostles knew not the way, or else they have deceived us ; for they have told us,

that the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, that the gate is strait, and the way narrow; and we must strive, if we will enter, for many shall seek to enter and not be able; and that the righteous themselves are scarcely saved. If ever souls obtain salvation in the world's common, careless, easy way, then I will say, there is a nearer road found out than ever God has revealed in the Scriptures to the sons of men.

I have seen this doctrine also thrown aside with contempt by others, who say, What! do you set us to work for heaven? Does our duty do any thing? Has not Christ done all? Is not this to make him a half Saviour, and to preach the law?

I reply, it is to preach the law of Christ; his subjects are not lawless. It is to preach duty to Christ; none is a more exact requirer of duty or hater of sin than he. Christ has done, and will do, all his work; and therefore is a perfect Saviour. But yet he leaves for us a work too. It is not a Saviour offered only, but received also, that must save us. It is not the blood of Christ shed only, but applied also, that must fully deliver us. Nor is it applied for the justification or salvation of a sleepy soul; nor does Christ carry us to heaven in a chair of security. Where he will pardon, he will make you pray, "Forgive us our trespasses;" and where he will give righteousness, he will give a hungering and thirsting after it. It is not through any imperfection in Christ that the righteous are scarcely saved, but through our own imperfection in duty. Our righteousness, which the law of works requires, and by which it is satisfied, is wholly in Christ, and not one grain in ourselves; nor must we dare to think of patching up a legal righteousness of Christ's and our own together. But yet we must personally fulfil the conditions of the new covenant, and so have a personal evangelical righteousness, or never be saved by Christ's meritorious righteousness. Therefore, say not, It is not duty that must save us, but Christ; for it is Christ in a way of duty. As duty cannot save us without Christ, so Christ will not save us without duty.

And as this motion must be strong, so it must be

constant and persevering, or it will fall short of rest. To begin in the spirit and end in the flesh will not bring the saints to Heaven. The certainty of the saints' perseverance, does not render admonition to constancy useless. Men seemingly as holy as the best of us, have fallen away. He that knew it to be impossible to deceive the elect, yet saw it necessary to warn us that he only "that endureth to the end, shall be saved." Christ's own disciples must be commanded to continue in his love, and that by keeping his commandments. The promises of Heaven in the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, are, in like manner, all addressed "To him that overcometh."

All these things are implied in a Christian's motion, and so pre-supposed to this rest; and he only that has the pre-requisite qualifications shall have the crown. Here, therefore, should Christians lay out their utmost care and industry. See to your part, and God will certainly see to his part. Look to your hearts and duties, in which God is ready with assisting grace, and he will see that you lose not the reward. The rest is glorious, and God is faithful. Christ's death is sufficient, and the promise is universal, free, and true. You need not fear missing heaven through the deficiency or fault of any of these. But yet for all this, the falseness of your own hearts, if you look not to them, may undo you. If you doubt of this, believe the Holy Ghost: "Having a promise left us of entering into his rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it."



CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE OF THE HEAVENLY REST.

WE proceed to consider, first, the nature of this Rest. Let us not remain in the outward court only; let us

ascend the steps; let us look within the veil. But, alas! how little know I of that whereof I am about to speak! The glimpse which Paul had, revealed that which could not or must not be uttered. But if he had had a tongue to utter it, it would have done no good, unless his hearers had possessed understandings to comprehend it. If he had spoken the things of heaven in the language of heaven, and none had understood that language, what better had we been? The Lord open our eyes and show both you and me his inheritance; not, however, as Balaam, whose eyes were opened to see the goodness of Jacob's tents, and of Israel's tabernacles, in which he had no portion; nor as Moses, who had only a discovery, but not the possession, and saw the land which he never entered; but as the pearl was revealed to the merchant in the gospel, who rested not till he had sold all he had, and bought it; or as heaven was opened to blessed Stephen, which he was shortly to enter, and the glory shown him which was soon to be his own possession.

I. This rest implies a cessation from motion or action; not, however, of all action, but merely of that which partakes of the nature of a means, and implies the absence of the end. When we enter the haven, we have done sailing; when the workman receives his wages, it implies he has done his work; when we are at our journey's end, we have done with the way. All means cease when we have the end. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail: whether there be tongues, they shall cease: whether there be knowledge," so far as it had the nature of a means, and was imperfect, "it shall vanish away." In like manner, faith may be said to cease, for the objects of faith shall be in possession. There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for. Neither shall we need to fast, and weep, and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Nor will there be further use for instructions and exhortations; preaching is done; sacraments are useless; the ministry of man

ceases; the labourers are called in, because the harvest is gathered, the tares burned, and the work finished; the unregenerate are past hope, and the saints past fear, for ever. Much less shall there be any need of labouring for inferior ends, as here we do, seeing they will all resolve themselves into the ocean of the ultimate end, and the lesser good be wholly swallowed up of the greatest.

II. This rest implies perfect freedom from all the evils that accompanied us in our course on earth, as well as from those eternal flames which the neglecters of Christ will inevitably endure. As God will not know the wicked so as to own them, so neither will heaven know iniquity so as to receive it. For "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." No such thing as grief and sorrow is known there. Nor is there such a thing as a languid body, helpless infancy, decrepit age, pining sickness, consuming care, harassing fears, nor any thing that deserves the name of evil. We did "weep and lament," when "the world did rejoice;" but our "sorrow is turned into joy, and our joy shall no man take from us."

III. This rest implies the highest degree of perfection, both of soul and body. This will qualify them to enjoy the glory, and to taste the sweetness of it. Here "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" for this eye of flesh is not capable of seeing them, nor this ear, of hearing them, nor this heart, of understanding them; but there the eye, the ear, and heart, are made capable of comprehending and enjoying them. The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object; the more pure the appetite, the more delicious the food; the more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. In like manner, the more perfect the soul, the more joyous to us are those joys, and the more glorious that glory.

IV. This rest implies the near fruition of God, the chief good. And here, wonder not, O Christian, if I be at a loss in my apprehensions and in my expressions. If to the beloved disciple, who had beheld Christ, and Moses, and Elias, on the mount of Transfiguration, and who leaned on his Master's bosom, it did not "appear what we shall be," but only in general, that when Christ "shall appear we shall be like him," no wonder if I know but little. When I know so little of God, I cannot know much what it is to enjoy him; when I know so little of my own soul while it is here in this tabernacle, how little must I needs know of the infinite Majesty, or of the state of this soul, when it shall be advanced in that enjoyment? What strange conceptions has a man born blind of the sun and its light; or a man born deaf, of the nature of sounds and music? So we yet want that sense by which God can be clearly known.

As all good whatsoever is comprised in God, and every thing in the creature is but a drop of this ocean; so all the glory of the blessed is comprised in the enjoyment of God, and if there be any mediate joys there, they are but drops from this. "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Every word is full of life and joy. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants that stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," then surely they that stand continually before God, and see his glory, are somewhat more than happy. To them Christ will "give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Yea, "He will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they shall go no more out: and he will write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from God." Nay, more, if more can be, "He will grant them to sit with him in his throne, even as he also overcame and has sat down with the Father in his throne. How delight-

ful is the following representation: "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." How sublime, how transporting is the following description: "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, having the glory of God, and his light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal, and it had a wall great and high, and it had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and the foundations of the wall were garnished with all manner of precious stones; and the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it; and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved, shall walk in the light of it; and they shall reign for ever and ever."

What presumption would it have been, ever to have thought or spoken of such things, if God had not spoken them before us! I durst not have thought of the saints' preferment in this life, as the Scriptures set it forth, had it not been declared by God himself. What arrogance would it have been to talk of being sons of God; of having fellowship and communion with him; of dwelling in him and he in us, if this had not been God's own language! How much less durst we have

thought of shining as the sun ; of being joint-heirs with Christ ; of judging the world ; of sitting on Christ's throne ; of being one with him, if we had not all this from the mouth, and under the hand of God ! But, "hath he not said it, and shall he not do it? Hath he not spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Yes, as the Lord God is true, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom Christ delighteth to honour." Be of good cheer, Christian, the time is near, when God and thou shall be near,—as near, indeed, as thou canst well desire. Thou shalt be his child, and he thy father ; thou shalt be an heir of his kingdom. And what more canst thou desire ? Thou shalt be one with him, who is one with the Father. Read what he asked for thee from his Father : "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

V. This rest implies a sweet and constant exercise of the powers of the soul and body in this fruition of God. If grace make a Christian differ so much from what he was, that one could say to his companion, I am not the man I was,—how much more will glory make us differ ! We may then much more say, This is not the body I had, these are not the senses I had. As God perfects our senses and enlarges our capacity, so will he increase the enjoyment of those senses, and fill up with himself all that capacity. This much is certain, that it will be the everlasting work of the saints, to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to praise him for ever and ever. As their eyes and hearts shall be filled with his knowledge, with his glory, and with his love, so shall their mouths be filled with his praise. Oh, blessed employment,—to sing for ever, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour, glory, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—"Worthy

is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests."—"Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Oh, Christians! this is the blessed rest; a rest, yet perpetual activity. For, "they rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Go on, therefore, O ye saints, while ye are on earth, in this divine exercise of praise.

As the bodily senses have their proper action, whereby they receive and enjoy their objects, so does the soul, in the exercise of its own powers, enjoy its own objects. Some of these powers we shall briefly notice.

1. *The Understanding.*—How noble a faculty of the soul is the understanding! It can compass the earth; it can measure the sun, and moon, and stars; it can foretell each eclipse to a minute, many years before. But this is the height of its excellency, that it can know God, who is infinite, and who made all these. Christian, when, after long gazing heavenward, thou hast got a glimpse of Christ, dost thou not sometimes seem to have been with Paul in the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body thou canst not tell, and to have seen things unutterable? Art thou not, with Peter, transported almost beyond thyself, and ready to say, "Master, it is good to be here?" Didst thou never look so long upon the Sun of Righteousness, till thine eyes were dazzled with his astonishing glory? and did not the splendour thereof make all things below seem dark to thee? Especially, in thy day of suffering for Christ, when he usually appears most manifestly to his people, didst thou never see one walking with thee in the midst of the fiery furnace, like to the Son of God? Believe me, Chris-

tians, yea, believe God, all you have yet known of God, is as nothing to what you shall know; in comparison of that, it scarcely deserves to be called knowledge. Our present childish thoughts of God, will then give place to a more manly knowledge. "Whether," says Paul, "there be knowledge, it shall vanish away: For we know in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: Now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am known."

2. *The Memory*.—This faculty will not be idle or useless in the heavenly world. To stand on that mount, whence we can see the wilderness and Canaan both at once; to stand in heaven, and look back on earth, and weigh them together in the balance,—how will it transport the soul, and make it exclaim, "Is this the inheritance that cost so dear a price as the blood of the Son of God? Thrice blessed love, that invented such a plan, and condescended to carry it into execution! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit's workings? Have the gales of Divine influence blown me into such a harbour? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory of which the Scriptures spoke, and ministers preached so much? Now I see the gospel is indeed glad tidings; tidings of great joy to all nations! Are my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking come to this? Are all my afflictions, sickness, languishing, fears of death, come to this? Are all Satan's temptations and the world's scorns, come to this? Unworthy soul! Is this the place to which thou camest so unwillingly? Didst thou hesitate to leave all, deny all, and suffer all, for this? Wast thou loath to die, to come to this? O false heart, didst thou make me doubt the truth of this glory? Didst thou question the truth of the Scripture which promised this? Didst thou show me improbabilities, and draw me to distrust

its declarations? O my soul! art thou not now ashamed that ever thou didst question that love which has brought thee hither? Art thou not ashamed of all thy hard thoughts of God, of all thy repining at those providences, which have had such an end? Now thou art convinced, that the ways which thou calledst bitter were necessary; that he was saving thee, as well when he crossed thy desires, as when he granted them; as well when he broke thy heart, as when he bound it up."

Thus, as the memory of the wicked will eternally augment their torment, so the memory of the saints will for ever increase their joys.

3. *The Affections.*—The full, the highest source of enjoyment, are the affections of love and joy. "God is love," says John, "and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." The exercise of this affection, in any case, carries much delight along with it; especially when the object appears deserving, and the affection is strong. But O what will it be, when perfect love shall have the strongest, incessant acting upon the most perfect object—the ever blessed God! Now the poor soul complains, "O that I could love Christ more!" but then thou shalt not be able to forbear loving him. Now thou knowest little of his amiableness, and therefore lovest little: then thine eye will affect thy heart, and the continual contemplation of his perfect beauty, will keep thee in continual transports of love. Christians, does it now stir up your love, to remember all the experiences of this grace; to look upon a life of mercies? Does not kindness melt you, and the sunshine of Divine goodness warm your frozen hearts? What will it then do, when you shall live in love, and have all in him who is all and in all?

This is not all. He returneth love for love; nay, a thousand times more. As perfect as we shall be, we cannot reach the measure of his love. Did he love thee an enemy, a sinner, and own thee when thou didst disclaim thyself? And will he not now immeasurably love thee as a son, a perfect saint, who returnest some

love for love? Thou shalt be eternally embraced in the arms of that love, which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting; of that love, which brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory. Know this, believer, to thy everlasting comfort, that if these arms have once embraced thee, neither sin, nor hell, nor any creature, shall force thee thence for ever. The sanctuary is inviolable, and the rock impregnable, whither thou hast fled. Thou hast not now to deal with an inconstant creature, but with him "with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." You may then exclaim, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity. No wonder, if angels desire to pry into this mystery. No wonder, if it be the study of the saints here "to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of this love, which passeth knowledge."

The affection of joy, also, has much share in this fruition. This is that to which all the rest lead, and in which they terminate, even the inconceivable complacency which the blessed feel in their seeing, knowing, remembering, loving and being beloved by God. Oh, what will that joy be, where the soul being perfectly prepared for joy, it shall be our work, our business, eternally to rejoice! "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am sat down with my Father on his throne." What sayest thou to all this, Oh! thou sad and drooping soul, that now spendest thy days in sorrow, thy breath in sighings, and thy voice in groanings; who minglest thy bread with tears;—what sayest thou to this great change, from all sorrow to the highest joy? "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Oh, blessed morning! thrice blessed morning! Poor, humble, drooping soul, how would

it fill thee with joy now, if a voice from heaven should assure thee of the love of God, of the pardon of thy sins, and of thy part in eternal joys! Oh! what then will be thy joy, when thy actual possession shall convince thee of thy title, and thou shalt be in heaven before thou art well aware; and when the angels shall bring thee to Christ, and when Christ shall take thee by the hand, and conduct thee to thy purchased possession, and bid thee welcome to his rest, and present thee unspotted before his Father, and give thee thy place about his throne!

But it is not thy joy only, it is a mutual joy as well as a mutual love. Is there such joy in heaven at thy conversion, and will there be none at thy glorification? Will not the angels welcome thee thither, and congratulate thy safe arrival? Yea, it is the joy of Jesus Christ; for now he beholds the end of his incarnation, and sufferings, and death, when "he is glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." This is his harvest, when he shall reap the fruit of his labours; when he shall "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Yea, the Father himself will joy, too, in our joy. Christian, write these words in letters of gold, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in his love; He will joy over thee with singing."



CHAPTER II.

THE PREPARATIVES TO THE HEAVENLY REST.

LET us consider the eminent antecedents, the great preparatives, the notable introduction to this rest; for the porch of this temple is exceedingly glorious, and the gate of it is called "Beautiful." Here these four things offer themselves to our observation, as the four

corners of this porch :—The glorious appearing of the Son of God, at the last day : His raising of our bodies from the dust, and uniting them again with the soul : His public and solemn proceedings in their judgment : His solemn celebration of their coronation, and his enthroning them in glory. Follow but this fourfold stream to the head, and it will bring you to the garden of Eden.

I. Contemplate the coming of Christ at the last day as connected with the everlasting rest of his people. To this end it is intended ; and to this end it is of apparent necessity. For his people's sake he sanctified himself to his office ; for their sake he came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended ; and for their sake it is that he will return. "If," says he, "I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The bridegroom's departure was not upon divorce ; he did not leave us with a purpose to return no more ; he has left pledges enough to assure us of his return. We have his word, his promises, his sacraments, which show forth his death till he come ; and his Spirit to direct, sanctify, and comfort us till he return. We have frequent tokens of love from him to show us that he forgets not his purpose nor us. Alas ! my fellow Christians, what would we do if our Lord should not return ? Fear not, it cannot be. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph. He that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess. Alas ! where else were all our hopes ? What were become of our faith, our prayers, our tears, and our waiting ? What were all the patience of the saints worth to them ? Would we not be of all men most miserable ? Christians, has Christ made us forsake all the world, and be forsaken by all the world ; to hate all, and to be hated by all ; and all this for him, that we might have him instead of all ? And will he, after all this, forget us and forsake us himself ? Far be such a thought from our hearts ! But why stayed he not with his people while he was here ? Why,—was not his work on earth done ? Must he not receive

the recompense of reward, and enter into his glory? Must he not take possession of heaven in our behalf? Must he not go to prepare a place for us? Must he not intercede with the Father, and plead his sufferings, and be filled with the Spirit to send it forth, and receive authority to subdue his enemies?

But oh! what a day will that be, when Christ shall come from heaven to set his captives free! It will not be such a coming as his first was, in poverty and contempt. He will not come to be buffeted, and scorned, and crucified again. He will not come, Oh! careless world! to be slighted and neglected by you any more. And yet that coming, which was necessarily an infirmity and reproach for our sakes, wanted not its glory. If the angels of heaven must be the messengers of that coming, as being "tidings of great joy to all people;" and the heavenly host must celebrate his nativity in the sublimest strains, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men;" Oh! with what shoutings will saints and angels at that day proclaim "Glory to God, and peace and good will towards men!" If the stars of heaven must lead men from remote parts of the world to come to worship a child in a manger, how will the glory of his next appearing constrain all the world to acknowledge his sovereignty! If he ride into Jerusalem amidst hosannahs, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest," Oh! with what proclamations of blessings, peace, and glory will he enter the new Jerusalem! If, when he was in the form of a servant, they cry out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" what will they say, when they shall see him coming in his glory! "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The promise of his coming and of our deliverance was comfortable. What will it be thus to see him with all the glorious attendance of his angels, come in person to deliver us!

“The mighty God, the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice; and the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is judge himself.” The coming of Christ is frequently mentioned by the prophets as the great support of his people’s spirits; and whenever the apostles would quicken to duty, or comfort and encourage patient waiting, they usually do it by mentioning Christ’s coming. Why then do we not more use this consideration as a cordial whenever we want support and comfort? To think and speak of that day with horror does well beseem the impenitent sinner, but ill the believing saint. Such may be the voice of a believer; but it is not the voice of faith. Christians, what do we believe, and hope, and wait for, but to see that day? This is Paul’s encouragement to moderation, “The Lord is at hand.” This is his consolation in the prospect of dissolution: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.” Dost thou long to have him come into thy soul with life and comfort, and considerest thyself as but a forlorn orphan, while he seemeth absent? And dost thou not much more long for that coming which shall perfect thy life, and joy, and glory? Dost thou rejoice after some short and slender enjoyment of him in thy heart? Oh! how wilt thou then rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Believe it, fellow Christians, this day is not far off; “for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” And though the unbelieving world, and the unbelief of thy heart, may say, “Where

is the promise of his coming? Do not all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?" yet let us know, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. One day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

When the conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah shall appear with all the hosts of heaven; when he shall surprise the careless world as a thief in the night; when "as the lightning appeareth in the east, and shineth even unto the west," so shall they behold him coming,—what a change will the sight of this work both with the world and with the saints! Now, poor deluded world, where is your mirth and your frivolity? Where is your wealth and your glory? Where that profane and careless heart, that slighted Christ and his Spirit, and all the offers of his grace? Where now that tongue that mocked the saints and jeered the holy ways of God, and laughed at his people's imperfections and their own slanders? Ah! your heart condemns you, and is ready to sink within you. Even when you say, "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon you, as travail upon a woman with child, and ye shall not escape." But, "blessed is that faithful and wise servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching:" "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Oh! how should it then be the character of a Christian "to wait for the son of God from heaven, even Jesus who delivereth us from the wrath to come!" And seeing he comes "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," what thought should gladden our hearts more than the thought of that day? O! Christians, how heartily should we put up that petition, "Thy kingdom come!" "Surely," says he, "I come quickly. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

II. The second stream that leads to paradise, is that great work of Jesus Christ, the raising of our body from the dust, and uniting it again to the soul. A wonderful effect of infinite power and love! Yea,

wonderful, indeed, says unbelief, if it be true. What ! shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man ? Dost thou dispute the power of the Almighty ? Dost thou object difficulties to Infinite Strength ? Let me take thee by the hand, and with reverence, as Elihu of old, plead for God. Seest thou this massive body of the earth ? Upon what foundation does it stand ? Seest thou this vast ocean of waters ? What limits them, and why do they not overflow and drown the earth ? Whence is that constant ebbing and flowing of the tides ? Wilt thou say from the moon, or other planets ? And whence have they that influence ? Must thou not come to a cause of causes, that can do all things ? And does not reason require thee to conceive of that cause as a perfect intelligence, and voluntary agent ? Look upward ; seest thou that glorious body of light, the sun ? How many times larger is it than all the earth ! and yet how many thousand miles does it run every minute, and that without weariness, or failing a moment ! Is not that power which does all this able to effect thy resurrection ? Dost thou not see as great works as a resurrection every day before thine eyes, but that the commonness thereof makes thee not admire them ? Is it not as easy to raise the dead, as to make heaven and earth, and all of nothing ? But if thou wilt not be persuaded, all I shall say more to thee is, as the prophet to the prince of Samaria, “Thou shalt see it with thine eyes,” but little to thy comfort. There is a rest prepared, but thou shalt not “enter in, because of unbelief.” But as for thee, O believing soul, never think to comprehend with thy narrow capacity the counsels and ways of thy Maker. When, therefore, he speaks, dispute not, but believe.

Come then, fellow Christians, let us contentedly commit these bodies to the grave ; that prison shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace, and take our rest ; it will not be an everlasting night, or endless sleep. What if we leave the troubles and tumults of the world, and enter into the chambers of the tomb, and the door be shut upon us, and we hide ourselves, as it were, for a little moment, “until the

indignation be over-past !” “ Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity ;” and then the earth shall disclose us, and the dust shall hide us no more. As sure as we awake in the morning, when we have slept out the night, so surely shall we then awake. “ We know that our Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth,” and we shall see him with these eyes.

Lay down freely this terrestrial, this natural body ; thou shalt receive it again a celestial, a spiritual body. Though thou lay it down in dishonour, thou shalt receive it in glory. Though thou art separated from it through weakness, it shall be raised again in mighty power. When the trumpet of God shall sound the call, “ Arise ye dead, and come away,”—who shall stay behind ? When he shall call to the earth and the sea, O earth, give up thy dead, O sea, give up thy dead,—who shall resist the powerful command ? The first that shall be called, are the saints that sleep ; and then the saints that are alive shall be changed ; for Paul hath told us by the word of the Lord, “ That they which are alive, and remain till the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (or go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then they which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore,” O Christians, “ comfort one another with these words.” This is one of the gospel mysteries, “ That we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption ; and this mortal, immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? Thanks be

to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Triumph now, O Christian, in these promises; thou shalt shortly triumph in their fulfilment. The grave that could not keep our Lord, shall not keep us: He arose for us, and by the same power shall we arise. "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." Oh, Christian, write these sweet words upon thy heart, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Let us never look at the grave, but let us see the resurrection beyond it. Faith is quick-sighted, and can see as far as eternity. Therefore, let our hearts be glad, and our glory rejoice; let our flesh also rest in hope; for he will not leave us in the grave, nor suffer us still to see corruption. "Let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Thus, Christian, thou seest that Christ, having sanctified the grave by his burial, and conquered death by his resurrection, a dead body and a grave are not now so horrid a spectacle to a believing eye. But as our Lord was nearest his glory when he was in the grave, even so are we. And he that has promised to make our bed in sickness, will make the dust as a bed of roses. Death shall not dissolve the union betwixt him and us, nor turn away his affections from us. But in the morning of eternity, he will send his angels, yea, come himself, and roll away the stone, and unseal our grave, and reach forth his hand, and deliver us alive to our Father.

III. Contemplate the public and solemn process of the judgment of the saints, when they shall first themselves be acquitted and justified, and then with Christ shall judge the world. Public I may well call it, for all the world shall there appear. Young and old, of all estates and nations, that ever were from the creation to that day, must here come and receive their doom. "I saw," says John, "a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the heavens and the earth fled away, and there was found no place

for them: And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: And the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works, and whosoever is not found written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire." O terrible! O joyful day! Terrible to those who have let their lamps go out, and have not watched, but have forgotten the coming of the Lord! Joyful to the saints, who waited and hoped to see this day! Then shall the world behold the goodness and severity of God; on them who perish severity, but to his chosen goodness. Then shall every one give account of his stewardship; every talent of time, health, knowledge, mercies, afflictions, means, warnings, must be reckoned for. Then the sins of youth, and those which they had long forgotten, and even their most secret sins shall all be laid open before men and angels. Then their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Oh! which way will the wretched sinner look? Oh! who can conceive the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot help him; the saints neither can nor will. None but the Lord Jesus can; but O there is the soul-killing misery, he will not. Nay, without violating the truth of his word, he cannot; though otherwise, in regard of his absolute power, he might. The time was, sinner, when Christ would, but you would not; and now, Oh how fain would you, but he will not. Then he followed thee in vain with entreaties, but thy ear and heart were shut against all. Now thou wilt cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" but he shall say, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." What then remains but to cry to the hills and to the mountains, "Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." But all in vain; for thou hast the Lord of the hills and the mountains for thine enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not thine. Sinner, make not light of this; for as thou livest (except a thorough change prevent it) thou shalt

shortly, to thy inconceivable horror, see that day. Oh, sinner! will thy cups then be wine or gall? Will it comfort thee to think of all thy mirth and gaiety, and how pleasantly thy time slipt away? Will it do thee good to think how rich thou wast, and how honourable? Or will it not rather wound thy very soul to remember thy folly, and make thee, cry out, with anguish of heart.

But why tremblest thou, O humble, gracious soul? Cannot the enemies and slights of Christ be foretold their doom, but thou must quake? Do I make sad the soul that God would not have sad? Doth not thy Lord know his own sheep, who have heard his voice and followed him? He that would not lose one Noah in a common deluge, when him only he had found faithful in all the earth; he that would not overlook one Lot in Sodom,—nay, that could do nothing till he went forth,—will he forget thee in that day? “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished.” He knoweth how to make the same day the greatest for terror to his foes, and yet the greatest for joy to his people. Indeed, if our judge were our enemy, as he is to the world, then we might well fear. But our judge is “Christ who died, yea, rather who is risen again, who also maketh intercession for us.” Oh, what inexpressible joy may this afford to a believer, that our blessed Lord, who loveth our souls, and whom our souls love, shall be our judge? Christian, did he come down from heaven, and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for thee,—and will he now condemn thee? Hath it cost him so dear to save thee; and will he now himself destroy thee? Hath he done the most of the work already, in redeeming, regenerating, justifying, sanctifying, and preserving thee; and will he now undo all again? Will he not finish what he hath begun? Let that day make the devils tremble, and the wicked tremble; but let us leap for joy. Though we cannot plead not guilty, in regard of fact; yet, being pardoned, we shall be acquitted by the proclamation of

Christ. The sentence of pardon, passed by the Spirit and conscience within us, used to be exceedingly sweet ; but this will fully and finally resolve the question, and leave no room for doubting again forever.

Indeed, we shall be so far from the dread of that judgment, that we ourselves shall become the judges. Christ will take his people, as it were, into commission with him ; and they shall sit and approve his righteous decisions. Oh, fear not now the reproaches, scorns, and censures of those that must then be judged by you. “Do ye not know,” saith Paul, “that the saints shall judge the world?” Nay, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” Surely, were it not the word of Christ that declares it, this advancement would seem incredible, and the language arrogant. O that the careless world were but wise to consider this, and that they would remember their latter end !—that they would be now of the same mind, as they will be when they shall see “the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat ; the earth also, and the works that are therein burnt up !” But rejoice, O ye saints ; yet watch, and what you have, hold fast till your Lord come, and study that use of this doctrine which the apostle propounds, “Seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hasting to the coming of the day of God.”

IV. The last and highest step to the saint’s advancement, is, their solemn coronation, enthronement, and reception into the kingdom. For as Christ, their head, is anointed both king and priest, so under him are his people made unto God both kings and priests, to reign and offer praises for ever. The crown of righteousness, which was laid up for them, the Lord the righteous Judge shall give them at that day. They have been faithful to the death, and therefore they shall receive the crown of life. Christ will grant them to sit down with him on his own throne ; and will give them power over the nations, even as he received of his Father. He will give them possession with these

applauding expressions, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But let us view more nearly the solemn yet delightful sentence which he will pronounce upon them. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Here every word is full of life and joy. **COME**: This is holding forth the golden sceptre to warrant our approach unto this glory. We were wont to hear, "Come, take up your cross, and follow me." Though that was sweet, yet this is much more so. **YE BLESSED**: Blessed, indeed, when that mouth shall so pronounce us; for though the world has accounted us accursed, and we have been ready to account ourselves so, yet certainly those that he blesses are blessed, and those only whom he curses are cursed. **OF MY FATHER**: Blessed in the Father's love as well as the Son's, for they are one. The Father has testified his love toward them in their election, donation to Christ, and accepting his ransom, as the Son has also testified his, in laying down his life for them. **INHERIT**: No longer bondmen, nor servants only, nor children under age, who differ not in possession, but only in title, from servants. But now we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. **THE KINGDOM**: No less than the kingdom! To be King of kings, and Lord of lords, is our Lord's own proper title; but to be kings and to reign with him is ours. **PREPARED FOR YOU**: God is the Alpha as well as the Omega of our blessedness. He prepared the kingdom for us, and then prepared us for the kingdom. **FOR YOU**: Not for believers only in general, but for you personally and determinately. **FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD**: Not only from the promise after Adam's fall, but, as the phrase usually signifies, from eternity. These were the eternal thoughts of God's love toward us, and this is what he purposed for us.

Thus we have seen the Christian landed safely in Paradise, and conveyed honourably to his everlasting

rest. Let us now view a little further those mansions, consider his privileges, and see whether there be any glory like unto this glory.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE HEAVENLY REST.

LET us draw nearer and contemplate the excellent properties and admirable attributes of this rest, which, as so many jewels, shall adorn the crown of the saints.

I. It is a singular honour and ornament, in the title of the Saints' Rest, that it is called the "Purchased possession;" that it is the fruit of the blood of the Son of God, the chief fruit, yea, the end and perfection of all the fruits of that blood. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Oh! to have our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense of his dying, bleeding love upon our souls. Now we are so stupefied with vile and senseless hearts, that we can read all the story of his bloody agony and passion, and hear all his sad complaints, with dulness and without emotion. But we shall then leave these hearts of stone behind us, and the sin that here so closely besets us, shall not be able to follow us into glory. With what astonishing apprehensions, then, will redeemed saints everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer! What a feast will it be, "when we shall drink of the fruit of the vine new with him in the kingdom of his Father!" David would not drink of the waters which he longed for, because they were the blood of those men who jeoparded their lives for them; and thought them fitter to be offered to God, than to be used by himself. But we shall value these waters the more highly, and drink them the more sweetly, because they are the blood of Christ, not jeoparded only, but shed for us.

They will be the more sweet and precious to us, because they were so bitter and dear to him. We usually estimate things by the price which they cost. If any thing we enjoy were purchased with the life of our dearest friend, how highly would we value it! Nay, if a dying friend deliver but a token of his love, how carefully do we preserve it, and still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it! And shall not then the death and blood of our Lord everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory? Methinks they should value at a high rate the plenty of the gospel, and the peace and freedom which they now enjoy, who remember what they have cost. How much precious blood! How many of the lives of God's worthies and witnesses! O then, when we are rejoicing in glory, how shall we think of the blood that redeemed our souls! And how shall we look upon him, whose sufferings did put that joy into our heart! How highly did David prize the love of Jonathan, who "stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to him, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle;" and also saved him from his father's wrath! How dear for ever will the love of Christ then be to us, who stripped himself, as it were, of his majesty and glory, and put our mean garment of flesh upon him, that he might put the robes of his own righteousness and glory upon us, and saved us, not from cruel injustice, but from his Father's deserved wrath! Well, then, Christians, as you write on your goods the price they cost you, so do on your righteousness and on your glory. Write down the price,—“The precious blood of Christ.”

II. A second pearl in the saints' diadem is, that it is a free gift. These two attributes, *purchased* and *free*, are the two chains of gold, which make up the wreath for the heads of the pillars in the temple of God. It was dear to Christ, but free to us. When Christ was to buy, silver and gold were of no avail; prayers and tears were of little worth; nor any thing, in fact, short of his blood. But when we come to buy, the price is fallen to nothing. Our buying is but

receiving. We have it without money, and without price." If the Father freely give the Son, and the Son freely pay the debt; and if both Father and Son do freely offer us the purchased blessing upon our cordial acceptance of it; and if they also freely send the Spirit to enable us to accept of it, then what is there here that is not free? May not every stone that builds this temple have inscribed upon it, "Grace, grace." Oh, the everlasting admiration that will surprise the saints when they think of this freeness! Indeed, if the proud-hearted, self-ignorant, self-admiring sinners should be thus advanced, who think none so fit for preferment as themselves, perhaps, instead of admiring free love, they would, with those unhappy angels, be discontented yet with their estate. But when the self-denying, self-accusing, humble soul, who thought itself utterly unworthy, finds itself wrapt up into heaven, and closed in the arms of Christ, even in a moment, do but think with yourselves what transporting, what astonishing admiration it must feel. He that durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but stood afar off, smiting on his breast, and crying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," finds himself in the city of the living God. He who was wont to write his name in Bradford's style, "The unthankful, the hard-hearted, the unworthy sinner!" and who was wont to wonder that patience could bear with him so long, and justice suffer him to live, to find himself in the presence of the great King! Ah, Christian, if worthiness were the condition of thy admittance into heaven, thou mightest sit down with John and weep, "because none in heaven or earth was found worthy." But blessed be God, "worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and through his title must we hold the inheritance.

This is our exceeding consolation, that as we paid nothing for God's eternal love, and nothing for the Son of his love, and nothing for his Spirit, and our grace and faith, and nothing for our pardon, so we shall pay nothing for our eternal rest. Yet this is not all. If it were only for nothing, and without our merit, the wonder were great; but it is, moreover,

against our merit, and against our long endeavouring of our own ruin. How astonishing will it be to think of the immeasurable difference between our deservings and our receivings, between the state we should have been in and the state we are in, to look down upon hell, and see the vast difference that grace hath made between us and the ungodly, to see the inheritance there, to which we were born, so different from that to which we are adopted! Was not I born in sin, and an heir of wrath, as well as yonder suffering souls? Did not I make light of Christ, and slight the offers of his grace a long time, as well as they? Did not I misimprove my time, and forget my soul and eternity, as well as they? Oh, who made me to differ? Was my heart naturally more disposed for Christ than theirs? Or any whit better affected to the Spirit's persuasions? Or would it ever have been willing, if he had not made me willing? Had I not now been in these flames, if I had had my own way, and been let alone to my own will? Did not I resist as powerful means, and lose as fair advantages as they? And should not I have lingered in Sodom till the flames had seized on me, if God had not in mercy delivered me? Oh, how free was all this love, and how free all this glory! We know to whom the praise is due, and must be given for ever. And, indeed, to this very end it was, that infinite wisdom cast the whole design of man's salvation into the mould of purchase and freeness, that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honour of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one nor obstruct the other; and that on these two hinges the gates of heaven might turn. So, then, let **DESERVED** be written on the door of hell, but on the gate of heaven **THE FREE GIFT OF GOD**.

III. This rest is peculiar to the saints. It belongs to no other of all the sons of men; not that it would have detracted from the greatness or freeness of the gift, if God had so pleased, that all the world should enjoy it. Distinguishing mercy affects more than general mercy. If the sun should shine on our habitations

only, or the rain fall on our fields only, we should more feelingly acknowledge the mercy, than now, when we enjoy these blessings in common. When one is enlightened, and another left in darkness; one reformed, and another enslaved by his lusts; when one sees other men's sins eternally punished, while his own are all pardoned; when one who is conscious of his own undeserving and ill deserving, sees his companion in sin perish, his neighbour, kinsman, father, mother, wife, child, for ever in hell, while he is exalted among the blessed in heaven; when we see those that used to sit with us in the same seat, and eat with us at the same table, and join with us in the same duties, now lie tormented in those flames, while we are triumphing in Divine praises; how sovereign, how overwhelming will the mercy appear!

IV. This rest is enjoyed in fellowship with the blessed saints and angels of God. Though it be proper to the saints only, yet is it common to all the saints. For what is it, but an association of blessed spirits in God; the communion of saints completed? Though, in a musical instrument, the strings receive not their sound and sweetness from each other, yet their concurrence causes that harmony which could not be produced by one alone. For those that have prayed, and fasted, and wept, and watched, and waited together, now to rejoice and praise together, methinks should much advance their happiness. As we have been together in labour, duty, and distress, so shall we be in the great recompense and deliverance; as we have been scorned and despised, so shall we be crowned and honoured together; as we have been together in persecution and prison, so shall we be also in the palace of consolation. Now all our praises shall make up one melody, and all our churches one church, and all ourselves but one body; for we shall be one in Christ, even as he and the Father are one. It is true we must be very careful that we look not for that in the saints which is to be found only in Christ, and that we expect not too great a part of our comfort in the fruition of their society. We are prone enough to this

kind of idolatry ; but yet he who commands us to love them now, will give us leave, in subordination to himself, to love them then, when he himself has made them much more lovely. And if we may love them, we shall surely rejoice in them ; for love and enjoyment cannot fail to accompany each other. If the forethought of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, is lawful joy, then how much more that real sight, and actual possession ? It cannot but be delightful to me to think of that day, when I shall join with Moses in his Song, with David in his Psalms, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb for ever ; when I shall see Enoch walking with God, Noah enjoying the end of his singularity, Joseph of his integrity, Job of his patience, Hezekiah of his uprightness, and all the saints the end of their faith. Will it conduce nothing to the perfection of my comfort to live eternally with Peter, and John, and Paul, and a thousand others whose names are dear to me ? I know that Christ is all in all, and that it is the presence of God that makes heaven to be heaven. But yet it much sweetens the thoughts of that place to me, to remember that there is such a multitude of my most dear and precious friends in Christ, “with whom I took sweet counsel, and with whom I went up to the house of God ;” in whose conversation was written the name of Christ ; whose sweet and sensible mention of his excellencies has often made my heart to burn within me. Nor is it only our old acquaintance, but all the saints of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, whom we shall there both know and comfortably enjoy. Yea, angels as well as saints, will be our blessed acquaintance and sweet associates. They who now are willingly ministering spirits for our good, will then be willingly our companions in joy for the perfecting of our felicity ; and they who had such joy in heaven at our conversion, will gladly rejoice with us at our glorification. This, I think, Christian, will be a more honourable assembly than you ever beheld here, and a more happy society than you were ever in before. “We shall come to mount Zion, and

to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." This, then, is one singular excellency of the heavenly rest, "that we shall be fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

V. The joys of this rest are immediately from God. We shall see God face to face, and stand continually in his presence; and consequently we shall derive our life and comfort immediately from him. Now we have little or nothing at all immediately from him, but most is at the second or third hand, or from sources which are to us unknown, as from the earth, from man, from the sun and moon, from the influence of the planets, from the ministration of angels; and doubtless, the farther the stream runs from the fountain, the more impure it is. The Christian even now knows by experience, that his most immediate joys are his sweetest joys; those which have least of man, and are most directly from the Spirit. That is one reason, as I conceive, why Christians who are much in secret prayer, and in meditation and contemplation, rather than they who are more in hearing, reading, and conference, are men of greatest life and joy; because they are nearer the fountain, and have all more immediately from God himself. And that I conceive is the reason also, why we are more indisposed to these secret duties, and can more easily bring our hearts to hear, and read, and confer, than to secret prayer, self-examination, and meditation; because in the former there is more of man, and in these we approach the Lord alone, and our natures draw back from the most spiritual and fruitful duties. Not that we should therefore cast off the other, and neglect any ordinance of God. Let such as would do this beware, lest while they would be higher than Christians, they prove in the end lower than men. We are not yet come to the time and state where we shall have all from God's immediate hand.

As God hath made all creatures and instituted all ordinances for us, so will he continue our need of them all. We must be contented with love tokens from him, till we come to receive our all in him. There is joy in these indirect receivings; but the fullness of joy is in his immediate presence. O Christian, you will then know the difference between the creature and the Creator, and the content that each of them affords. We shall then have perpetual day without the sun; "For the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." We shall have rest without sleep, health without physic, strength without food: we shall have enlightened understandings without preaching, and communion with God without sacraments. Christ shall refresh us with the immediate fruition of heavenly joys, in the kingdom of his Father. To have necessities, but no supply, is the case of sinners in hell; to have necessities supplied by means of creatures, is the case of us on earth; to have necessities supplied immediately from God, is the case of the saints in heaven; to have no necessity at all, is the prerogative of God himself. We shall then live in our Father's house, and shall receive our portion from his own hand; then he shall fully unbosom to us his love, and God shall be all, and in all.

VI. This rest will be seasonable. When we have had in this world a long night of darkness, will not the day breaking, and the rising of the Sun of righteousness be seasonable? When we have endured a hard winter in this cold climate, will not the reviving spring be seasonable? When we have passed a long and tedious journey, and that through no small dangers, is not home seasonable? When we have had a long and perilous war, and have lived in the midst of furious enemies, and have been forced to stand on a perpetual watch, and received from them many a wound, would not peace with victory be now seasonable? Surely, he who looks upon the troubled face of the world, would conclude that rest should to all men be

seasonable. Some of us are languishing under continual weakness, and groaning under grievous pains, crying in the morning, Would God it were evening; and in the evening, Would God it were morning;—weary of walking, weary of sitting, weary of standing, weary of lying, weary of eating, of drinking, of speaking, weary of our very friends, weary of ourselves. O, how oft hath this been my own case! And is rest not yet seasonable? The saints in particular, are very weary of that which the world cannot feel. Some are weary of a blind mind; some of a hard, some of a proud, some of a passionate heart; some are weary of their daily doubtings, and fears concerning their spiritual state; some of the want of spiritual joys; and some of the sense of God's wrath; and is not rest now seasonable? When a poor Christian has desired, and prayed, and waited for deliverance many a year, is not rest then seasonable? When he is ready almost to give up, and says, I am afraid I shall not reach the end, and that my faith and patience will scarcely hold out, is not this a fit season for rest? Will not Canaan be seasonable after so many years' travel, and that through a hazardous and grievous wilderness? To the world, indeed, it is never in season; they are already at their own home, and have what they most desire; but for the thirsty soul to enjoy the fountain, and the hungry to be filled with the bread of life, and the naked to be clothed from above, and the children to come to their father's house,—methinks this should seldom be unseasonable. We grudge that we find not a Canaan in the wilderness, or the "songs of Sion in a strange land,"—that we find not our home by the way, and are not crowned in the midst of the fight, and receive not our inheritance before we are of age, and have not heaven before we leave the earth,—and would not all this be very unseasonable?

I confess in regard to the churches' service, the removing of the saints may sometimes appear to us unseasonable. God does this as a judgment, and the Church has ever prayed hard before it would part

with them, and greatly laid their loss to heart. Hence the great mournings at the departure of the saints, and the sad hearts that accompany them to their graves; but this is not especially for the departed, but for ourselves and our children.

I conclude, then, that whatsoever it is to those that are left behind, yet the saints' departure is to themselves usually seasonable. I say usually, because I know that even a saint may have a death in some respect unseasonable, even though it translate him to Heaven. He may die in judgment, as good Josiah. He may die for his sin. He may die by the hand of public justice; or die in a way of public scandal. He may die in a weak degree of grace, and consequently, have a less degree of glory. But yet it will ordinarily be found that the righteous "come to the grave as a shock of corn fully ripe;" and you may often observe that in the ordinary course of God's dealings, he purposely makes his people's last hour in this life to be of all others, though to the flesh most bitter, yet to the spirit most sweet; and that they who feared death through the most of their lives, yet at last are more willing to die than ever.

VII. This rest will be suitable.

1. It is suitable to their natures. The new nature of saints suits their spirits to this rest; and, indeed, their holiness is nothing else but a spark taken from this element, and, by the Spirit of Christ, kindled in their hearts, the flame whereof, as mindful of its own Divine Original, doth ever mount the soul aloft, and tend to the place whence it comes: it works toward its own centre, and makes us restless till there we rest. Gold and earthly glory, temporal crowns and kingdoms, could not constitute a rest for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, so neither are they endued with so low a nature. These may be a portion for lower spirits, and fit those whose nature they suit; but they cannot fit a saint-like nature. As God will have from them a spiritual worship, suitable to his own spiritual being, so will he provide them with a spiritual nature. When carnal persons think

of heaven, their conceptions of it are also carnal; and were it possible for such to obtain it, it would certainly be their trouble, not their rest, because it is so contrary to their nature. A heaven of good fellowship, and wantonness, and voluptuousness, would better please them, as being more agreeable to their natures. But a heaven of the knowledge of God and Christ; a delightful complacency in mutual love, and everlasting rejoicing in the fruition of God; a perpetual singing of his high praises; this is a heaven for a saint, a spiritual rest, suitable to a spiritual nature. Then we shall live in our element. To be locked up in gold and in pearl, would be but a wealthy starving; to have our tables furnished with plate and ornaments, without meat, would be but to be richly famished; to be lifted up with human applause, is but a very airy felicity; to be advanced to the sovereignty of all the earth, would be but to wear a crown of thorns; to be filled with the knowledge of arts and sciences, would be but to promote the conviction of our unhappiness. But to have a nature like God, to be holy as he is holy, and to have God himself as our happiness, how well do these agree!

2. It is suitable to their desires. Whilst our desires remain corrupted and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to deny them, yea, to destroy them, than to satisfy them. But those which are spiritual are of God's own planting, and he will surely water them, and give the increase. Is it so great a work to raise them in us; and shall they, after all this, vanish and fail of being gratified? To send the word and Spirit, to provide mercies and judgments, to raise our desires from the creature to God, and then to suffer them to perish without success;—this were to multiply and augment our misery. He quickened us to hunger and thirst for righteousness, that he might make us happy in a full satisfaction. Christian, this is a rest after thy own heart. It contains all that thy soul can wish; that which thou longest for, prayest for, labourest for,—there thou shalt find it all. Thou hadst rather have God in Christ, than all the world. Why there thou

shalt have Him. O what wouldst thou not give for assurance of his love! Why there thou shalt have assurance beyond suspicion. Nay, thy desires cannot now extend to the height of what thou shalt there obtain. Desire what thou canst, and ask what thou wilt as a Christian, and it shall be given thee, not only to the half, but to the enjoyment of the whole of the kingdom. This is a life of desire and prayer; but that is a life of fruition and enjoyment.

3. It is suitable to their necessities. It contains whatsoever they truly wanted; not supplying them with the gross created comforts, which now they are forced to make use of, which, like Saul's armour on David, are more a burden than a benefit. It was Christ, and perfect holiness, which they most needed, and with these they shall be abundantly supplied. Their other necessities are far better removed, than supplied in the present carnal way.

VIII. This rest will be perfect. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. As there will be no mixture of corruption with our graces, so will there be no mixture of suffering with our happiness. There will be none of those waves in that harbour, which now so toss us up and down on the wide ocean. We are now at the gates of heaven, and presently almost as low as hell. We wonder at the changes of Providence toward us, being scarcely two days together in the same condition. To-day we are well, to-morrow sick; to-day in esteem, to-morrow in disgrace; to-day in gladness, to-morrow in sadness; to-day we have friends, to-morrow only enemies. Nay, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup; our pleasantest food has a taste of gall. If revelations should raise us to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan is presently sent to buffet us, and the thorn in the flesh will pierce our hearts. But there is nothing of this inconsistency in heaven. If perfect love cast out fear, then perfect joy must needs cast out sorrow; and perfect happiness exclude all misery. There will be a universal perfecting of all

our parts and powers, and a universal removal of all our evils.

1. We shall rest from ignorance. Thy understanding, O Christian, shall never more be troubled with darkness: ignorance and error are inconsistent with this light. Now thou walkest like a man in the twilight, ever afraid of being out of the way; but then all this darkness will be dispelled. We shall know which was the right side, and which the wrong; which was truth, and which was error. O! what would we not give to know clearly all the profound mysteries in the doctrine of the decrees, of redemption, of justification, of the nature of grace, of the divine attributes! What would we not give to see all dark passages of Scripture made plain, and all seeming contradictions reconciled! Why, when glory shall have removed the veil from our eyes, all these will be known in a moment. The poorest Christian will presently there be a more perfect divine than the profoundest theologian is here. O that happy day, when error shall vanish away for ever; when our understandings shall receive their light from the face of God, as the full moon from the sun, when there is no earth to interpose between them!

2. We shall rest from sin. "There shall in nowise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. He who has undertaken to present the church to his Father, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy, and without blemish," will now most certainly accomplish what he has undertaken. He that has prepared for sin the torments of hell, will never admit it into the blessedness of heaven. If, therefore, Christian, thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed and watched, and laboured against it so long? I know, if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin, than to be made heir of all the world. Why, wait till then, and thou shalt have thy desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts, which lie down and rise up with thee, which accom-

pany thee to every duty, which thou canst no more leave behind thee, than leave thyself behind thee, shall now be left behind for ever. They may accompany thee to death but they shall not proceed a step further. We shall no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence. No pride, passion, slothfulness, senselessness, shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections; no imperfection in our love; no uneven walking; no grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action or unholy conversation. We shall rest from all these for ever.

3. We shall rest from suffering. When the cause is gone, the effect ceases. Our sufferings were but the consequences of our sinning; and here they both shall cease together.

(1.) We shall rest from all our perplexing doubts and fears of God's love. We shall hear that kind of language no more,—“What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my father that my heart is upright, that my conversion is genuine, that my faith is sincere? Oh! I fear that my sins are yet unpardoned, that my religion is but hypocrisy, and that God will at last reject me from his presence. How can he accept so vile a wretch, so hard-hearted a sinner, such an undervaluer of Christ as I am?” All this kind of language shall there be turned into the praises of him who has forgiven, who has converted, who has accepted, yea, who has glorified a wretch so unworthy. It will then be as impossible for thee to doubt and fear, as it is now to doubt of the food which you are eating, or to fear it is night, when you see the sun shining.

(2.) We shall rest from all sense of God's displeasure, which was here our greatest torment. Surely hell shall not be mixed with heaven. Hell is the place for the glorifying of his justice and prepared wrath; but heaven, of his love and mercy. Job will not then use his own language, “Thou writest bitter things against me, and takest me for thine enemy, and settest me up as a mark to shoot at, so that I am a

burden to myself." David will not then complain, "That the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in him; and that his hand presseth him sore; that he remembers God and is troubled, that his wrath lieth hard upon him, and that he afflicteth him with all his waves." Here the Christian is oft complaining: "O, if it were the wrath of man, I could bear it! But the wrath of the Almighty, who can bear? O, that all the world were mine enemies, if I were but assured that he was my friend!" But, O that blessed day! when all sense of God's displeasure shall be swallowed up in the ocean of love.

(3.) We shall rest from all the temptations of Satan. What a grief it is to a Christian, even though he yield not to the temptation, that he should be solicited to deny his Lord; that he can set about nothing that is good, but Satan must be dissuading him from it, distracting him in it, or discouraging him after it! What a torment is it, to have such horrid motions made to his soul, such blasphemous ideas presented to his mind; sometimes cruel thoughts of God, sometimes undervaluing thoughts of Christ, sometimes unbelieving thoughts of Scripture, sometimes injurious thoughts of Providence. What a distress is it, to be tempted to turn to present things, to play with the baits of sin, to venture on the delights of flesh, and even to atheism itself; especially, when we know the treachery of our own hearts, that they are as tinder or gunpowder, ready to take fire as soon as one of these sparks shall fall upon them. But here is our comfort. When the day of our deliverance comes, we shall fully rest from these temptations. Satan shall then be bound; the time of his temptations shall then be over; he himself shall be led captive in chains. Now we walk among his snares, and are in danger of being circumvented with his wiles: but then we shall be beyond his stratagems, and out of the reach of his enticing charms. We shall no more need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" nor to "watch that we enter not into temptation;" but now they who "continued with Christ in his temptations shall by him

be appointed to a kingdom, even as his Father appointed to him, that they may eat and drink at his table in his kingdom." "Blessed are they that endure temptation; for when they are tried, they shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

(4.) We shall rest from all the temptations of the world and the flesh. Every sense is a snare; every member a snare; every creature a snare; every mercy a snare; every duty a snare to us. We can scarcely open our eyes but we are in danger. If we behold our superiors, we are in danger of envy. If we see sumptuous buildings, pleasant habitations, honours and riches, we are in danger of covetousness. If we look on the rags and beggary of others, we are in danger of self-applauding thoughts and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if deformity, it is apt to excite loathing and disdain. We can scarcely hear a word spoken, but it contains to us matter of temptation. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart! How strong and prevalent a temptation is our appetite; and how constant and strong a watch does it require! Have we comeliness and beauty? What fuel for pride! Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason and gifts of learning? O! how hard is it not to be puffed up, to hunt after applause, to despise our brethren, to dislike the simplicity that is in Christ, to affect a pompous, fleshly service of God, and to exalt reason above faith! Are we unlearned? How apt are we to despise what we have not, to undervalue what we know not, to err with confidence, because of our ignorance! Are we men of eminence and authority? How strong is our temptation to stand upon our honour and privileges, to forget ourselves, our poor brethren, and the public good! How hard to devote our power to the glory of him from whom we received it! How prone to make our will our law, and to cut out all the enjoyments of others, both civil and religious, by the rules and model of our own interest and policy! Are we

inferiors and subject to others? How prone to envy their pre-eminence, to bring all their actions to the bar of our incompetent judgment, to censure and slander them, and murmur at their proceedings! Are we rich, and are we not too much exalted? Are we poor, and are we not discontented? If we be sick, O how impatient! If in health, how few and stupid are our thoughts of eternity! If death be near, we are distracted with fears of it! If we think it far off, how careless is our preparation for it! Do we set about duty? Why, there are snares too. Either we are stupid and indolent; or we are formal in the performance of it; or we rest in it, and turn from Christ, who should be at once the spring and the object of it. See what a sad case we poor Christians are in, and especially they that discern not their danger; it is almost impossible they should escape. It was not without reason that our Lord declared, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

But for ever blessed be that Omnipotent love, which saves us out of all these snares, and makes our straits but the manifestations of the glory of his saving grace! In heaven the danger and trouble will all be over. As Satan has no entrance there, so neither shall any thing enter to serve his malice, but all things shall there with us conspire to raise the praises of our great Deliverer. Then shall we sing, "Blessed be the Lord who hath not given our souls for a prey. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

(5.) We shall rest from all the abuses and persecutions of the world. This is the time for crowning with thorns: that is the time for crowning with glory. Now the law is, "That whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" then they that have "suffered with him, shall be glorified" with him. Now we must be hated of all men for Christ's sake; then he will be "admired in all them that believe." Now, because we "are not of the world, but Christ hath chosen us out of the world, therefore doth the world hate us;" then, because we are not of the world,

but are taken out of it, therefore will the world honour us. We are here "made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men; we are reckoned as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things." Now you can attempt no work for God without opposition, and find you must lose either the love of the world and your outward comforts, or else the love of God and your eternal salvation; but in heaven you shall have none to discourage you in the service of God, nor any company but will further your work, and gladly join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joys and praises.

(6.) We shall rest from all our sad divisions and unchristian quarrels with one another. In heaven, there is no contention, because there is none of that pride, ignorance, and other corruption, which prevail so much on earth. There, every man is not conceited of his own understanding, but all are admiring the divine perfection, and in love with God and one another. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Is not this his last great legacy, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you?" Mark the expression of that command, "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men:" "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Such peace, such fellowship shall be in heaven.

(7.) We shall rest from all our participation in the sufferings of our brethren. Alas! if we had nothing in ourselves to trouble us, yet what heart could lay aside sorrows, that lives in the sound of the church's sufferings. Unless we are turned into steel or stone, and have lost both Christian and human affection, there needs no more than the miseries of our brethren to fill our hearts with successions of sorrows, and make our lives a continued lamentation. The church on earth is a mere hospital. Which ever way we go, we hear complaining; and into what corner soever we cast our eyes, we behold objects of grief and pity; some groaning under a dark understanding, some un-

der a senseless heart ; some languishing under unfruitful weakness, some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness, and some in such a lethargy that they are past complaining.

As now our friends' distresses are our distresses, so then our friends' deliverance will be part of our own deliverance. How much more joyous is it now to join with them in their days of thanksgiving and gladness, than in their days of humiliation, when they sit in sackcloth and ashes ! How much more joyous will it be, then to join with them in their perpetual praises and triumphs, than to hear them now bewailing their wretchedness, their want of light, of life, of joy, of assurance of grace, of Christ, of all things !

But a far greater grief it is to our spirits, to see the spiritual miseries of our brethren,—to see such a one with whom we took sweet counsel, and who zealously joined with us in God's worship, now fallen off to sensuality, turned drunkard, worldling, or a persecutor of the saints ; to see our dearest and most intimate friends, turned aside from the truth of Christ, and confident in the grossest errors ; to see many who are connected with us by the nearest ties, neglecting Christ, and their souls, while nothing will awaken them out of their sinful security ; to look an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister in the face ; to look on a carnal wife, or husband, or child, or friend, and to think how certainly they will be in hell for ever, if they die in their present unregenerate state. Blessed be that approaching day, when our eyes shall no more behold such sights, nor our ears hear any more such tidings. To think of the gospel departing, of our sun setting at noon-day, of poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and with great pains extinguishing the light that should guide them to salvation,—what sad thoughts are these ! Who could then take the harp in hand, or sing the pleasant songs of Sion ? But blessed be the Lord who has frustrated our fears, and who will hasten that happy day, when Zion shall be exalted above the mountains, and her gates shall not be shut day nor night ; when "the sons of them that afflicted

her, shall come bending unto her, and all they that despised her, shall bow themselves at the soles of her feet; and they shall call her, The City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

(S.) We shall rest from all our own personal sufferings. Though this may seem a small thing to those that live in continual ease, and abound in all kind of prosperity; yet methinks, to the daily afflicted soul, it should make the fore-thoughts of heaven delightful. As all our senses are the inlets of sin, so they are become the inlets of sorrow. Fears devour us, and darken our delights as the frosts nip the tender buds. Cares consume us, and feed upon our spirits, as the scorching sun withers the delicate flowers. O the multitude of tender membranes, nerves, muscles, veins, arteries, and every one a fit subject for pain, and fit to communicate that pain to the whole.

But O the blessed tranquillity of that region, where there is nothing but sweet, continued peace! No succession of joy there, because no intermission. Our lives will be but one joy, as our time will be changed into one eternity. O healthful country, where none are sick! O fortunate land, where all are kings! O place most holy, where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants, save to their supreme Monarch! No more shall the poor man be tired with his incessant labours. No hunger, or thirst, no cold, or nakedness: no pinching frosts, no scorching heats. No more shall our faces be pale or sad; our groans and sighs will be done away; and God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. No more parting asunder of friends, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings. No more breaches, nor disproportion in our friendship, nor any trouble accompanying our relations in life; as of parents over their children, or magistrates over their subjects, or ministers over their people. No more sadness for our study lost, our preaching lost, our entreaties lost, the offer of Christ's blood lost, our dear people's souls lost. Oh! what room can there be for any evil, where the whole is perfectly filled with God? Then shall “the ransomed

of the Lord return and come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

(9.) We shall rest from all the labour and pain of duty. The conscientious magistrate now cries out, O the burden that lieth upon me! The conscientious parent, that knows the preciousness of his children's souls, and the constant pains required to their godly education, cries out, O the burden! The conscientious minister, when he reads his charge, 2 Timothy iv. 1, and views his pattern, Acts xx. 18—31,—when he hath tried a while what it is to study, and pray, and preach, according to the weight and excellency of the work, to go from house to house, and from neighbour to neighbour, and to beseech them night and day with tears, and, after all, to be hated and persecuted for so doing, no wonder if he cry out, O the burden! and be ready to relinquish the work like Jonah, and with Jeremiah to say, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name; for his word is made a reproach to me, and a derision daily." How long may we study and labour before one soul is brought over to Christ; and when it is done, how often do the snares of error again entangle them! How many receive the doctrine of delusion, before they have time to be built up in the truth! The first new strange apparition of light so amazes them, that they think they are in the third heaven, when they are but newly passed from the suburbs of hell; and they are presently as confident as if they knew all things, when they have not half light enough to acquaint them with their own ignorance; but, after ten or twenty years' study, they usually become of the same judgment as those whom they despised. Seldom does a minister live to see the ripeness of his people; but one sows and plants, another waters, and a third reaps and receives the increase. In short, every relation, state, age, has a variety of duty. Hence every conscientious Christian cries out, "O the burden! or, O my weakness, that makes it so burdensome!" But

in heaven we shall no more feel duty to be a burden. We shall not, indeed, be relieved from the service of God; but we shall have strength equal to it. Here, even "the youths faint and are weary, and the young men utterly fall:" but there, "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

IX. The last jewel in our crown is, that it is an everlasting rest. This crowns the whole; without this, all else were comparatively little or nothing. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys; and it would pierce us the more, because of the singular excellencies which we must forsake. It would be a hell in heaven to think of losing it; as it would be a kind of heaven in hell, had the damned but the hope of at last escaping. How can we take delight in any thing, when we remember how short that delight will be? How can it but spoil our pleasure, when we see it dying in our hands? How could I be happy, if I had not my eye fixed upon eternity? When methinks I foresee my dying hour, my friends waiting for my last gasp, and closing my eyes, saying, He is dead;—when methinks I see my coffin made, my grave prepared, and my friends there leaving me in the dust,—what is there on earth that can afford me pleasure? It utterly disgraces the greatest glory in my eyes, if you can but truly call it mortal. I can value nothing that shall have an end, except as it leads to that which hath no end; or as it comes from that love which hath neither beginning nor end. O happy souls in hell, should you but escape, O miserable saints in heaven, should you be dispossessed after millions of ages! This word Everlasting, contains the accomplished perfection of their torment, and of our glory. O that the careless sinner would but seriously study this word Everlasting! Methinks it would startle him out of his deepest sleep. O that the gracious soul would believingly study this word Everlasting! Methinks it would revive him in the deepest agony. And must I, Lord, thus live forever? Then will I also love

forever. Must my joys be immortal? And shall not my thanks be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never cease thy praise. "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, forever and ever. Amen!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE HEAVENLY REST.

HAVING thus described the Heavenly Rest, we shall now proceed to the confirmation of this truth, and though this may seem needless, in regard of its own clearness and certainty, yet in regard of our distance and infidelity, there is nothing more necessary.—Though I have all along sufficiently confirmed what I have said by the testimony of Scripture, yet I will here briefly state a few distinct proofs of this important truth.

I. This rest is fore-ordained for the saints, and the saints are also fore-ordained for it. "Now," says the apostle, "they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." The saints themselves are called, "vessels of mercy, before prepared unto glory." In Christ they have obtained the inheritance, "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And we are elsewhere told, that "whom he did predestinate, them he also glorified." "He hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

Now, though the intentions of the weak and unwise may be frustrated, yet "the thoughts of the Lord shall surely come to pass, and as he hath purposed, it shall stand." "The counsel of the Lord

standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Who then can bereave us of that rest which God hath designed for us by his eternal purpose?

II. This rest is purchased, as well as purposed, for us. It was for this end that God gave his Son, and the Son gave his life. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Accordingly, the apostle says, it is by the "blood of Jesus that we enter into the holiest of all;" and in the book of Revelation, the saints are represented as ascribing the glory of their salvation entirely to the death of Christ; "Thou art worthy," they sing, "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." Indeed, either Christ must lose his blood and sufferings, and never "see of the travail of his soul," but all his pains and expectation be forever frustrated, or else "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

III. This rest is promised to us. Christ himself prays, and what he asks will be granted, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." On this subject he tells his disciples to dismiss all their fears, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," *i. e.* fear not all your enemies' rage; fear not all your own unworthiness; doubt not of the certainty of the gift; for it is grounded upon the good pleasure of your Father. And again he says, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me a kingdom; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." In like manner the apostle James says, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?"

IV. All the means of grace, all the workings of the

Spirit upon the soul, all the gracious exercises of the saints, are so many proofs, that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God." All these means and motions imply some end to which they tend, and no lower end than this rest can be imagined. God would never have commanded his people to repent and believe, to fast and pray, to knock and seek, to read and study, to confer and meditate, to strive and labour, to run and fight, and all this to no purpose. Nor would the Spirit of God impel them to this, and create in them a supernatural power, and enable them and excite them to a constant performance, were it not for this end to which it leads. Nor could the saints reasonably attempt such employments, nor undergo such heavy sufferings, were it not for this desirable end.

V. The saints have even on earth the beginnings, foretastes, earnest, and seals of this rest; and may not all this assure them of the full possession in heaven? The kingdom of heaven is within them. They have a beginning of that knowledge which Christ has said is eternal life. And do you think that God will give the beginning, where he never intends to give the end? Nay, God often gives his people such foresights and foretastes of this rest, that their spirits are even transported with it, and they could heartily wish they might be present there. Paul was taken up into the third heaven, and saw and heard things that were unutterable. And I doubt not but some poor Christians among us, who have little to boast of outward appearances, have often these foretastes in their souls. And do you think that God will tantalize his people? Will he give them the first fruits, and not the harvest? Will he show them glory to set them longing for it, and then deny them the actual fruition? Will he lift them up so near this rest, and give them such rejoicings in the prospect of it, and yet never bestow it on them? Nay, doth he give them "the earnest of the inheritance," and "seal them with the holy Spirit of promise," and yet will he deny them the full possession? These absurdities may not be charged on an ordinary man, much less on the faithful and righteous God.

Lastly, The Scripture speaks of some who have already entered into this rest, as Enoch, Abraham, Lazarus, the thief who was crucified with Christ, and many others. Now, if there be a rest for these, surely there must be a rest for all believers.

But it is vain to heap up Scripture proofs, seeing it is the very end of the Scripture, to be a guide to us to this blessed state; to discover it to us, persuade us to seek it, and to point out the hindrances that would keep us from it. There is, in fact, no one that doubts the certainty of this promised glory, but those who doubt the truth of the Scripture, or else know not what it contains.

CHAPTER V.

THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THE HEAVENLY REST REMAINETH.

HAVING thus considered some of the evidences of this great truth, I shall now proceed to show you who the people of God are, for whom this blessed rest remaineth.

They are then only a part of lost mankind, whom God hath from eternity predestinated to this rest, for the glory of his mercy; whom Christ hath redeemed with an absolute intent of saving; whom the Holy Spirit renews by the power of his grace, and makes in some sort like himself, stamping his image on them, and making them holy as he is holy, and whom he will at length crown with glory, honour, and immortality in heaven.

I. They are chosen by God.

As it is no more excellent a creature than man that is to have this possession, so is it that man who once was lost. The heirs of this kingdom were taken, even from the tree of execution, and rescued by the

strong hand of love from the power of the prince of darkness, who having caught them in his snares, led them captive at his will. They were once within a step of hell, who are now to be advanced as high as heaven.

That they are but a part of this lost race is apparent both from Scripture and experience. They are "a little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom." Fewer they are than the world imagines; yet not so few as some drooping spirits suppose, who are fearful that God will cast off them, who would not reject him for all the world; and are suspicious that God is unwilling to be their God, when yet they know themselves willing to be his people.

II. They are redeemed by Christ.

God has given all things to his Son, but not as he has given his chosen to him. The difference is clearly expressed by the apostle: "He hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to his Church." And though Christ is in some sense "a ransom for all," yet not in that special manner as for his people.

III. They are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

Seeing we are born God's enemies, we must be new born his sons, or else remain his enemies still. O! that the unregenerated world knew and believed this, in whose ears the new birth sounds as a paradox; who, because they never felt any supernatural work upon themselves, believe that there is no such thing, but that it is the conceit and fantasy of idle brains; who make the terms regeneration, sanctification, holiness, matter of reproach and scorn, though they are the words of the Spirit of God; and Christ himself has said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The greatest reformation of life that can be attained to, without this new life wrought in the soul, may procure their further delusion, but never their salvation.

Let us now see by what acts this new life discovers itself. Here there are three things which demand our

attention: conviction, change of will, perseverance in grace.

1. *Conviction.* This comprehends knowledge and assent. It comprehends the knowledge of what the Scripture speaks against sin and sinners, and that the Scripture which so speaks is the word of God. It comprehends a sincere assent to the verity of Scripture, and some knowledge of ourselves, particularly of our guilt, and its consequences.

This conviction comprehends not only knowledge and assent, but sensibility. God works on the heart as well as on the head. Both were corrupted, and out of order; the principle of new life, therefore, quickens both. The knowledge which is merely theoretical, never suitably moves the affections. The doctrines of religion produce in the understanding of an unrenewed soul, but a superficial apprehension, and therefore, can produce in the heart but small sensibility. As hypocrites may know many things, but nothing with the clear apprehensions of an experienced man; so may they be slightly affected. To view in the map of the Gospel, the precious things of Christ, and his kingdom, may slightly affect us; but to thirst for, and drink of the living waters, and to be heir of that kingdom, must needs work another kind of sensibility. The great things of sin, of grace, and Christ, and eternity, which are of weight one would think to move a rock, shake not the heart of the carnal professor. It is true, some soft and passionate natures may have tears at command, when one that is truly gracious hath none; yet is this Christian with dry eyes, more solidly apprehensive and more deeply affected, than the other is in the midst of his tears; and the weeping hypocrite will be drawn to his sin again by a trifle, which the groaning Christian would not be hired to commit, by crowns and kingdoms.

The following are some of the things of which sinners are convinced by the Spirit of God.

(1.) They are convinced of the evil of sin. The sinner is made to know and feel that sin, which was his delight, is, indeed, a loathsome thing; a breach

of the righteous law of the most high God, dishonourable to him, and destructive to the soul. He was wont to marvel, what made men raise such an outcry against sin, or what harm it was for a man to take a little forbidden pleasure. He saw no such heinousness in it, that Christ must needs die for it, and most of the world be eternally tormented in hell on account of it. He thought this was somewhat hard measure, and greater punishment than could possibly be deserved by a little fleshly liberty or worldly delight; by the neglect of Christ, his word, or worship; by a wanton thought, a vain word, a dull duty, or a cold affection; but now his views are changed. God hath opened his eyes to see the inexpressible vileness of sin, which satisfies him of the reasonableness of all this.

(2.) They are convinced of their misery. He who before read the threatenings of God's law, as men do the stories of foreign wars, or as they behold the wounds and the blood in a picture or piece of tapestry which never makes him smart or fear, now finds it is his own story, and he perceives it is his own doom, as if he found his name written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan, "Thou art the man." The wrath of God seemed to him but as a storm to a man in a dry house, or as the pains of the sick to the healthy bystander; but now he finds the disease is his own, and feels the smart of the wounds in his own soul. In a word, he finds himself a condemned man, that he is dead and damned in point of law, and that nothing was wanting but the mere execution to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable.

Whether you call this a work of the law or gospel, yet sure am I it is a work of the Spirit wrought, in some measure, in all the regenerate. And though some do judge it unnecessary bondage, yet it is beyond my conception, how he should come to Christ for pardon that did not first find himself guilty and condemned; or for life, that never felt himself dead. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Yet I deny not that some gracious

souls may scarcely perceive, and others scarcely remember this work of humiliation. The discovery of the remedy as soon as the misery, must needs prevent a great part of the trouble, and make the distinct effect on the soul to be with much more difficulty discerned. Nay, the actings of the soul are so quick, and often so confused, that the distinct order of these workings may not be apprehended or remembered at all. And, perhaps, the joyful apprehensions of mercy may make the sense of misery the sooner forgotten.

(3.) They are convinced of the vanity and insufficiency of the creature. Every man is naturally an idolator. Our hearts turned from God in our first fall, and ever since, the creature has been our god. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves. When he should be our sovereign, we rule ourselves. The laws which he gives us, we would correct; and if we had the making of them, we would have made them otherwise. When we should depend on him for our daily mercies, we would rather keep our stock ourselves, and have our portion in our own hands. When we should stand at his disposal, we would be at our own. When we should submit to his providence, we usually quarrel with it, as if we knew better what is good for us than he, and how to dispose of all things more wisely.

Thus we are naturally our own idols. But down falls this Dagon, when God once renews the soul. It is the great business of that great work to bring the heart back to God himself. He convinces the sinner, that the creature of himself can neither be his God, to make him happy, nor yet his Christ, to recover him from his misery, and restore him to God, who is his happiness. This God does not only by his word, but by his providence also; because words seem but wind, and will hardly take off the raging senses. He therefore makes his rod to speak, and continue speaking, till the sinner hear and learn by it this great lesson. This is the great reason why afflictions so ordinarily concur in the work of conversion. When a sinner made honour his god, and God shall cast him into

lowest disgrace, or bring him that idolized his riches, into a condition wherein they cannot help him—what a powerful help is here to this conviction! When a man that made pleasure his god,—whether ease, or sports, or mirth, or company, or gluttony, or drunkenness, or clothing, or buildings, or whatsoever a ranging eye, a curious ear, a raging appetite, or a lustful heart could desire, and God shall take these from him, or turn them all into gall and wormwood,—what a help is here to this conviction! When God shall cast a man into a languishing sickness, and inflict wounds and anguish on his heart, and stir up against him his own conscience; and then, as it were, take him by the hand, and lead him to credit, to riches, to pleasure, to company, to sports, or whatsoever was dearest to him, and say, “Now try if these can help thee. Can these heal thy wounded conscience? Can they support thy tottering frame? Can they keep thy departing soul in thy body? Will they prove to thee eternal pleasures, or redeem thy soul from eternal flames? Cry aloud to them, and see whether these will now be unto thee instead of God and his Christ.” O how this works with the sinner, when sense itself acknowledges the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of the creature’s vanity, and our very deceiver is undeceived. Now he despises his former idols, and calls them all miserable comforters. He chides himself for his former folly, and pities those that have no higher happiness.

(4.) They are convinced of the absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and the perfect excellency of Jesus Christ. This conviction is not by mere argumentation, but also by the sense of our desperate misery, as a man in famine is convinced of the necessity of food; or as a man that has heard his sentence of condemnation, is convinced of the necessity of pardon; or as a man that lies in prison for debt is convinced of the necessity of a surety to discharge it. Now the sinner finds himself in another case than ever he was aware of. He feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees that there is none but Christ can take it off. He

perceives that he is under the wrath of God, and that the laws proclaim him a rebel and an outlaw, and that none but Christ can make his peace. He feels the curse lie upon him, and upon all he has, and that Christ alone can make him blessed. He is now brought to this dilemma; either he must have Christ to justify him, or be eternally condemned; he must have Christ to bring him to God, or be eternally shut out from his presence. And now no wonder, if he cry as the martyr Lambert, "None but Christ, none but Christ." It is not gold but bread, that will satisfy the hungry; nor any thing but pardon that will comfort the condemned. "All things are now but dross and dung;" and what he counted gain is now "but loss in comparison of Christ." For as the sinner sees his utter misery, and the inability of himself and all things to relieve him, so he perceives that there is no saving mercy out of Christ.

And as the soul is convinced of the necessity of Christ, so also of his full sufficiency. He sees that though the fig-leaves of our own righteousness are too small to cover our nakedness, yet the righteousness of Christ is large enough; that though ours is disproportioned to the justice of the law, yet Christ's does extend to every tittle. His sufferings being a perfect satisfaction to the law, and all power in heaven and earth being given to him, he is able to supply all our wants, and "to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

The sinner is also convinced of the perfect excellency of Jesus Christ, both as he is considered in himself, and as considered in relation to us, both as he is the only way to the Father, and as he is the end, being one with the Father. Before, he knew Christ's excellency as a blind man knows the light of the sun; but now he knows it as one that beholds his glory.

2. *Change of will.* After this sensible conviction, the will also discovers its change; and that in regard to all the four objects now mentioned.

(1.) The sin which the understanding pronounces evil, the will accordingly turns from with abhorrence.

Not that the sensitive appetite is changed, or any way made to abhor its object ; but when it would prevail against the conclusions of reason, and carry us to sin against God, Scripture becomes the rule, and reason the master, and sense the servant. This disorder the will abhors.

(2.) The misery which sin has procured, he not only discerns, but bewails. It is impossible that the convinced soul should look either on its trespass against God, or yet on its own self-procured calamity, without compunction and contrition. He who truly discerns that he has crucified Christ, and killed himself, will surely in some measure be "pricked at the heart." If he cannot weep, he can heartily groan ; and his heart feels what his understanding sees.

(3.) The creature he now renounces as vain, and turns it out of his heart with disdain. Not that he undervalues it, or disclaims its use ; but only its idolatrous abuse, and its unjust usurpation.

(4.) He turns to God as his Father, and to Christ as his Saviour. Having before been convinced, that nothing else can be his happiness, he now finds it is in God ; and therefore looks toward it. But yet it is rather with desire than hope ; for the sinner has already found himself to be a stranger and an enemy to God, under the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law ; and knows there is no coming to him in peace, till his state be changed : and therefore, having before been convinced that only Christ is able and willing to do this, and having heard this mercy in the gospel freely offered, his next act is to accept of Christ Jesus as his Saviour and Lord.

I have said that, in believing in Christ, the soul accepts him at once as a Saviour and Lord : for in both relations will he be received, or not at all. It is not only to acknowledge his sufferings, and accept of pardon and glory, but to acknowledge his sovereignty, and submit to his government.

3. *Perseverance in grace.* The believer perseveres in grace to the end. Though he may commit sin, yet he never disclaims his Lord, or renounces his allegiance

to him. Though this perseverance be certain to true believers, yet it is made a condition of their final salvation. And eternally blessed be that hand of love which has drawn the free promise, and subscribed and sealed that which ascertains to us, both the grace which is the condition, and the kingdom which on that condition is pledged to us.

Thus, I have given you a brief enumeration of the essential characteristics of the people of God, not a full portraiture of them in all their excellencies, nor all the marks whereby they may be discerned. And though it will be part of the following application to put you upon trial, yet because the description is now before your eyes, and is fresh in your memory, it will not be unseasonable, nor unprofitable for you, to take an account of your state, and to view yourselves in this glass before you pass on any further. I beseech thee, therefore, as thou hast the hope of a Christian, and the reason of a man, to search carefully, and judge thyself as one that must shortly be judged by the righteous God, and faithfully to answer these few questions which I shall here propound to thee.

I will not inquire, whether thou rememberest the time or the order of the workings of the Spirit on thy soul. There may be much uncertainty and mistake in that. But I desire thee to look into thy heart, and see whether thou find such works wrought within thee, and then, if thou be sure they are there, it is not so material though thou know not when or how thou camest by them.

Hast thou, then, been convinced of the universal depravation of thy soul, and of the universal wickedness of thy life? Hast thou seen how vile a thing sin is, and that, by the tenor of the law which thou hast transgressed, the least sin deserves eternal death? Hast thou perceived thyself sentenced by it to this death, and been convinced of thy natural undone condition? Hast thou seen the utter insufficiency of every creature, either to be itself thy happiness, or the means of curing thy misery, and making thee happy again in God? Hast thou been convinced that

thy happiness is only in God as the end, and only in Christ as the way to him, and that thou must be brought to God by Christ, or perish eternally? Hast thou seen the full sufficiency that is in Christ to do for thee whatsoever thy case requires, by reason of the dignity of his person, the greatness of his power, the fulness of his satisfaction, and the freeness of his promises? Hast thou discovered the excellency of this pearl to be worth thy selling all to buy it? Has all this been joined with some sensibility of heart, like the convictions of a man that thirsts, of the worth of drink, and not merely a change of opinion produced by reading or education, as a bare notion of the understanding? Has it proceeded to an abhorring of sin, I mean in the bent and prevailing inclination of thy will, though the flesh do attempt to reconcile thee to it? Have both thy sin and misery been a burden to thy soul? And if thou couldst not weep, yet couldst thou heartily groan under the insupportable weight of them? Hast thou renounced all thine own righteousness? Hast thou turned thy idols out of thy heart so that the creature has no more the sovereignty, but is now a servant to God and to Christ? Dost thou accept of Christ as thy only Saviour, and expect thy justification, sanctification, and glorification from him only? Dost thou take him also for thy Lord and King? Are his laws the most powerful commanders of thy life and soul, and do they ordinarily prevail against the commands of the flesh, of Satan, and of the world, and against the greatest interest of thy credit, profit, pleasure, or life? Has Christ the highest room in thy heart and affections, so that, though thou dost not love him as thou wouldst, yet thou lovest nothing else so much as him? Hast thou made a hearty covenant to this end with him, and delivered thyself up to him, and taken thyself for his, and not thine own? Is it thy utmost care and watchful endeavour, that thou mayest be found faithful in this covenant; and though thou fall into sin, yet wouldst thou not renounce thy bargain, nor change thy Lord, nor give up thyself to any other government for all the world? If this be truly thy

case, thou art one of these people of God, of whom my text speaks; and as surely as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for thee. Only see thou abide in Christ, and persevere to the end; for it is they only who endure to the end that shall be saved; but "if any draw back, his soul will have no pleasure in them."

But if no such work has been wrought within thee, if thy soul be still a stranger to all this, and thy conscience tell thee it is none of thy case, the Lord have mercy on thy soul, and open thy eyes, and change thy heart; for in the case thou art in, there is no hope. Whatever thy deceived heart may think, or how strong soever thy hopes be, yet wilt thou shortly find to thy cost, except thy conversion prevent it, that thou art none of the people of God, and that the rest of the saints belongs not to thee. Thy dying hour draws near, and so does that great day of separation, when God will make an everlasting difference between his people and his enemies. Then woe, forever woe to thee, if thou be found in the state which thou now art in! Thy own tongue shall then proclaim thy woe, with a thousand times more agony and vehemence than mine can possibly do it now. O that thou wert wise, that thou wouldst consider this, that thou wouldst remember thy latter end, that yet while thy soul is in thy body, and a price in thy hand, and opportunity and hope before thee, thy ears may be open to instruction, and thy heart may yield to the persuasions of God; and thou mayest bend all the powers of thy soul about this great work; that so thou mayest rest among his people, and enjoy the inheritance of the saints in light!

CHAPTER VI.

REASONS WHY THE HEAVENLY REST REMAINS, AND IS NOT HERE ENJOYED.

I SHALL NOW proceed to show you, why it is said this rest remains, and is not to be enjoyed till we come to another world.

I. The chief reason is, it is not the will of God that we should have our rest on earth. Who should dispose of the creatures, but he that made them; and order the times and changes respecting them, but their absolute Lord, who alone has wisdom to order them for the best, and power to see his will accomplished? You may, therefore, as well ask, Why have we not the spring and harvest without winter? Or why is not all the world a sun, that it may be more glorious? as ask, Why have we not rest on earth?

II. It is not the natural order of things that we should have our rest on earth. All things must come to perfection by degrees. Nothing is perfect in its beginning, where the fall brought an imperfection. The strongest man must be first a child; the greatest scholar must be first a school-boy; the most skilful artificer was first an ignorant learner; the tallest oak was once an acorn. This is the constant course of nature in the production of sublunary things. Now, this life is our infancy; and would we have God overturn the course of nature for us?

III. It would deprive God of much honour if we had our rest on earth. If our rest were here, most of God's providences would be useless, and his great designs would be frustrated. Should God lose the glory of all the deliverances of his church, of the fall of his enemies, of the wonders wrought to this end, merely that men may have their happiness on earth? If man had kept his first rest in paradise, God would not have had an opportunity to manifest his far greater

love to the world in the gift of his Son. If man had not fallen into the depth of misery, Christ would not have come down from the height of glory, nor died, nor risen, nor been believed on in the world.

And as God would not have had opportunity for the exercise of all his grace, so he would not have had corresponding returns from us. We would never so fear offending him, nor depend on him so closely, nor call on him so earnestly, if we wanted nothing. Do we not even now feel how ready our prayers are to become lifeless, if we be but in health, and prosperous, though we are still far from contentment and rest? How little then would he hear from us, if we had what we would have? God delights in the soul that is humble and contrite, and trembles at his word; but there would be little of this in us, if we had here our full desires. Have not thy own highest joys and praises to God, O Christian, been occasioned by thy dangers, or sorrows, or miseries? We think we could praise God best if we wanted nothing; but experience tells us the contrary.

IV. It would be no small injury to ourselves, if we had our rest on earth. Oh the sweet comforts which the saints have had in returns to their prayers, when they have been long in sorrow, and God has lifted them up, and spoken peace to their souls, and granted their desires, and said, as Christ to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee; arise from thy bed of sickness, and walk, and live!" How should we know what a tender hearted Father we have, and how gladly he would come forth to meet us, and take us in his arms, if we had not, as the prodigal, been denied the husks of earthly pleasure and profit, upon which the wordling feeds! We should never have felt Christ's tender hand, binding up our wounds, and wiping the tears from our eyes, if we had not been involved in sorrows.

And it would be our loss for the future, as well as for the present. It is a delight to a soldier or a traveller to look back upon his adventures and escapes when they are over; and for a saint in heaven to look

back upon the state in which he was on earth, and to remember his sins, his sorrows, his fears, his tears, his enemies and dangers, his wants and calamities, must needs make his joys more joyful. When he reaches his journey's end, he will look back upon the way. When the fight is done, and the danger over, his rejoicing in the remembrance of them is not done, nor the praises of his Redeemer yet over. But if we had nothing but rest on earth, what room would there be for these rejoicings and praises in heaven?

V. We labour under a natural incapacity of rest on earth.

1. We ourselves are at present incapable subjects of rest; and that in respect both of soul and body. Can a soul that is so weak in grace, so prone to sin, so hampered with contradictory principles and desires, have perfect rest on earth? What is rest, but the perfection of our graces in habit and act, to know God perfectly, and love him, and rejoice in him? How then can the soul be at rest, which possesses so little of this knowledge, and love, and joy?

And our bodies are incapable as well as our souls. They are not now those purified bodies which they shall be, when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal hath put on immortality. They are our prisons and our burdens, so full of defects and infirmities, that we are fain to spend the most of our time in repairing them, and supplying their continual wants, and mollifying their grievances. Is it possible that an immortal soul should have rest, in such a mean and distempered habitation, especially when it every day expects to be turned out, and to leave its beloved companion to the worms? Surely these sickly and weary bodies must be refined to a perfection suitable thereto before they can be capable of perfect rest.

2. We want those objects on earth which can alone afford us rest. Those we do enjoy, are insufficient; and that which is sufficient is absent from us.

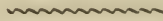
What we possess here is insufficient to be our rest. We enjoy the world, and its labours, and fruits; but alas! what is there in the world to give us happiness?

They that have the most of it, have the greatest burden, and the least rest of any others. They that set most by it, and rejoice most in it, do cry out at last that all is "vanity and vexation of spirit."

And as what we enjoy on earth is insufficient to be our rest, so God who is sufficient, is here little enjoyed. It is not on earth that he has prepared the presence chamber of his glory. He has drawn the curtain between us and him. We are far from him as creatures, and farther as frail mortals, and farthest of all as sinners. We hear now and then a word of comfort from him, and receive his love tokens, to keep up our hearts and hopes: but, alas! this is not our full enjoyment. "While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord;" even absent while he is present; for though he be not far from us, seeing "we live, and move, and have our being from him," who is all in all, yet have we not eyes now capable of seeing him, for mortals cannot see God and live. And can any soul that has made God his portion, and chosen him for his only happiness, find rest in so vast a distance from him, and so seldom and small enjoyment of him?

Lastly. There is a moral impropriety in our having rest on earth. There is a worthiness which must go before our rest. It has the nature of a reward; not, indeed, a reward of debt, but a reward of grace. "To him that overcometh," says Christ, "will I grant to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "I have fought a good fight," says Paul, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give unto me in that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing." And are we fit for the crown, before we have overcome; or the prize, before we have run the race; or to be ruler of ten cities, before we have improved our ten talents; or to enter into the joy of our Lord, before we have well

done as good and faithful servants ; or to inherit the kingdom, before we have manifested our love to Christ, by our love to his people ? Let men cry down works as they please, yet these you will find are the conditions of the crown. God will not alter the course of justice to give you rest, before you have laboured ; nor the crown of glory, till you have overcome. Thus we see reasons enough, why our rest should remain till the life to come.



CHAPTER VII.

WHETHER DEPARTED SOULS ENJOY THE HEAVENLY REST BEFORE THE RESURRECTION.

I HAVE but one thing more to clear, before I come to the use of this doctrine, and that is, whether the heavenly rest remain till the resurrection, before we shall enjoy it, or whether we shall have possession of it before. Truly, it would be a somewhat uncomfortable doctrine to the godly at their death, to think of being deprived of their glory till the resurrection ; but though the soul separated from the body will not enjoy the glory and happiness of heaven so fully and perfectly as it shall after the resurrection, when they shall be again united ; yet, that the souls of believers do enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory, even while they remain separated from the body, I shall prove by the following considerations :—

1. Though the discourse of the rich man in hell, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, be but a parable ; yet it is unlikely that Christ would employ language even in a parable, which seemed evidently to intimate and suppose the happiness or misery of the soul immediately after death, if there were no such thing.

Does not Christ's argument with the Sadducees proceed upon this supposition ? " God," says he, " is

not the God of the dead, but of the living ;” and consequently the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were then living.

3. Does not Scripture tell us, that Enoch and Elijah are already taken up to heaven? And can we think that they possess that glory alone?

4. Did not Peter, and James, and John, see Moses also with Christ on the Mount? Yet the Scripture says Moses died. And is it likely that Christ deluded their senses, in showing them Moses, if he did not partake of that glory till the resurrection?

5. The words of Christ to the thief on the cross, very clearly teach us this doctrine, “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

6. The words of Stephen are, in like manner, as plain as we can desire, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Surely, if the Lord received it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated; but is where he is, and beholds his glory.

7. These words of Paul, are so exceedingly plain, that I yet understand not what tolerable exception can be made against them, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight.) We are confident, I say, willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.” What could be spoken more plainly?

8. No less clear is that declaration of the same apostle, in his epistle to the Philippians:—“I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.” What sense were there in these words, if Paul had not expected to enjoy

Christ till the resurrection? Why should he be in a strait, or desire to depart? Would he be with Christ ever the sooner for that? Nay, should he not rather have been loath to depart upon the very grounds which he here states? for while he was in the flesh, he enjoyed something of Christ; but being departed, he would, according to this doctrine, enjoy nothing of Christ till the resurrection.

9. Consider that declaration in the epistle to the Hebrews: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

Lastly, That passage is no less plain, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." If the blessedness were only in resting in the grave, then a beast or stone were as blessed; nay, it were evidently a curse, and not a blessing.

Though I have but briefly named these arguments, yet I doubt not but if you will consider them, you will discern the clear evidence of this important truth. Believe, therefore, O faithful souls, whatever all the deceivers in the world may say to the contrary, that your souls shall no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, than angels will be their convoy; Christ, with all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their company; heaven will be their residence, and God will be their happiness. You may therefore when you die, boldly say as Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," or, as Christ, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

BOOK II.



CHAPTER I.

THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO LOSE THE HEAVENLY REST.

IF there remains a rest for the people of God only, what doleful tidings is this to the ungodly world! That there is so much glory, but none for them; so great joys for the saints of God, while they must consume in perpetual sorrows; such rest for them that have obeyed the gospel, while they must be forever restless in the flames of hell! If thou who readest these words art a stranger to Christ, and shalt live and die in thy present condition, let me tell thee, I am a messenger of the saddest tidings to thee, that ever thy ears did hear, Thou shalt never partake of the joys of heaven, nor taste of the saints' eternal rest. If thou live and die in thy unregenerate state, as sure as the heavens are over thy head, and the earth under thy feet; as sure as thou livest and breathest in this air, so surely shalt thou be shut out of this rest of the saints, and receive thy portion in everlasting fire.

Perhaps, indeed, thou wilt turn upon me, and in the pride of thy heart, say, Who made you the door-keeper of heaven? And when did God show you the book of life, or tell you who they are that shall be saved, and who shut out?

Now, in reply to this, I would say, First, I do not name thee, or any other: I do not conclude of persons individually, and say, This man shall be shut out of heaven, and that man shall be taken in. I only conclude it of the unregenerate in general, and of thee con-

ditionally, If thou be such an one. Secondly, I do not go about to determine who shall repent, and who shall not, much less that thou shalt never repent and come to Christ. These things are unknown to me. I would far rather persuade thee to hearken in time, before the door is shut, that so thy soul may return and live, than tell thee that there is no hope of thy repenting and returning. But if thou lie hoping that thou shalt return, and never do it; if thou talk of repenting and believing, but still indulge in delay; if thou live and die with the world, is it a hard question, whether or not thou shalt be saved? Cannot I certainly tell, that thou shalt perish for ever, except I had seen the book of life? Why, the Bible also is the book of life, and it describes plainly those that shall be saved, and those that shall be condemned. Though it does not name them, yet it tells you all those signs and conditions by which they may be known. Do I need to ascend up to heaven to know, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord?" or, "that it is the pure in heart who shall see God?" or, "that except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?" or, "that he that believeth not is condemned already; and that he shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him?" and that "except you repent, you shall all perish," with a hundred more such plain Scripture expressions? Cannot these be known without searching into God's counsels? Why, has thy Bible lain by thee in thy house so long, and didst thou never read such words as these? Or hast thou read it, and yet dost thou not remember such passages as these? Nay, didst thou not find, that the great drift of the Scripture is, to show men who they are that shall be saved, and who not, and let them see the condition of both estates? And yet dost thou ask me how I know who shall be saved? Is it not decreed, that if thou love father, mother, wife, children, houses, lands, or thine own life better than Christ, thou canst not be his disciple? Is this the word of man, or of God? Is it not then an undoubted truth, that in the state in which thou now art, thou

hast not the least title to heaven? Shall I tell thee from the word of God, It is as impossible for thee to be saved, except thou be born again, and be made a new creature, as it is for the devils themselves to be saved? Nay, God has more plainly and frequently declared in the Scripture, that such sinners as thou shalt never be saved, than he has done that the devils shall never be saved. What trembling should seize on thee, who hast the hand of God against thee,—and that not in a sentence or two only, but in the whole tenor and scope of the Scriptures,—not threatening thee with the loss of a temporal kingdom only, as he did Belshazzar, but with the loss of an everlasting kingdom? But because I would fain have thee to lay this close to thy heart, I will stop a little longer, and show thee,

First, The nature of thy loss.

Secondly, The aggravations of thy loss.

Thirdly, The extent of thy loss, as including all that is comfortable on earth, as well as heaven.

Lastly, The greatness of the positive torments of the damned in hell.

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## SECTION I.

### *The Nature of the Sinner's Loss.*

I. The ungodly will lose all that glorious personal perfection which the people of God shall enjoy in heaven. They will lose that shining lustre of the body, surpassing the brightness of the sun at noonday, with which the saints shall be invested. But if they will lose that corporeal glory with which the saints shall be invested, much more will they lose that moral perfection which is characteristic of the heavenly state, those holy dispositions and qualifications of mind, that blessed conformity to the image of God, that cheerful readiness to do his will, that perfect rectitude in all their actions, which adorn all the inhabitants of heaven, whether men or angels. Instead of this, they shall have that perverseness of will, that disorder of their

affections, that loathing of good, that love of evil, that violence of passion, which they had on earth. It is true, their understandings will be much enlightened, by the sad experience which they will have in hell, of the falsehoods of their former conceits and delusions. It is true, they will cease from many of those sins which they commit here on earth. They will be drunk no more, satisfy raging lusts no more, be gluttonous no more; nor oppress the innocent, nor grind the poor, nor devour the houses and estates of their brethren, nor persecute and destroy the members of Christ. These, and many other sins, they will lay aside. But this will not arise from any renovation of their natures: they will have the same dispositions still; their hearts will be as bad, nay worse, than ever, though their course of action will be changed, because the opportunities for indulgence are gone for ever.

II. They shall lose the favour and presence of God. As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but said, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" so he will abhor to retain them in his household, or to give them entertainment in his fellowship and glory. He will never admit them to the inheritance of his saints, nor permit them to stand among them in his presence, but will say, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." Then, though they had preached, or wrought miracles in his name, he will not know them; and even those that did eat and drink in his presence on earth, shall be cast out of his heavenly presence for ever. Oh, little does the world now know what a loss that soul suffers which loses God! As the enjoyment of God is the heaven of the saints; so the loss of God is the hell of the ungodly. As the enjoying of God is the enjoying of all; so the loss of God is the loss of all.

III. They shall lose all those spiritual and delightful affections and employments, by which the saints feed on God. That transporting knowledge, those ravishing views of his glorious face, the inconceivable pleasure of loving him, the apprehensions of his infinite love to us, and the rivers of consolation where-



with he will satisfy his people, will be all unknown to them. And is it nothing to lose all this ?

Sinners had no delight in praising God on earth. Their recreations and pleasures were of another kind, and now when the saints are employed in magnifying him, and singing his praises, the ungodly will be denied this happiness, and have employment suitable to their natures and deserts. Their hearts were full of hell upon earth. Instead of God, and his love, and fear, and grace, they were full of pride and self-love, and lust, and unbelief; and therefore hell must now entertain those hearts, which formerly entertained so much of it. Their houses on earth were the resemblance of hell. Instead of worshipping God, and calling upon his name, there was scorning at his worship, and swearing by his name; and therefore now hell must be their habitation for ever, where they shall never be troubled with that worship which they abhorred, but join with the rest of the damned in blaspheming that God, who is avenging their former impieties and blasphemies. Can it be expected, that they who made themselves merry while on earth, in deriding the persons and families of the godly, for their frequent worshipping and praising God, should at last be admitted into the family of heaven, and join with those very saints in their most perfect praises? Surely without a change upon their hearts before they go hence, this is utterly impossible. It will be too late then to say, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out;” let us “enter with you to the marriage-feast;” let us now join with you in the joyful heavenly melody.’ You should have joined in it on earth, if you would have joined in it in heaven. As your eyes must be taken up with other kind of sights, so must your hearts be taken up with other kind of thoughts, and your voices turned to other kind of tunes. There will be no singing of the songs of Sion in the land of your thralldom; “they that go down to the pit do not praise him.” Who can rejoice in the place of sorrows? Who can be glad in the land of confusion?

IV. They shall lose the blessed society of angels

and glorified saints. Instead of being companions of those happy spirits, and numbered with those who are made kings and priests unto God, they shall be members of the corporation of hell, where they shall have companions of a far different nature and quality. While they lived on earth, they loathed the saints, or at least they would not be their companions in labour, and in suffering; and therefore they shall not now be their companions in their glory. You will be shut out of that company from which you first shut out yourselves, and you will be separated from them, with whom you would not be joined on earth. They molested you with their faithful reproofs of your sin. Their holy conversation troubled your consciences; they condemned your looseness by their strictness, your profaneness by their holiness, your negligence by their diligence. The day is near when they will trouble you no more. "Between them and you there will be a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to them who would come from thence."

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## SECTION II.

### *The Aggravations of the Sinner's Loss.*

PERHAPS, however, some will be ready to think, if this be all, they do not much care; they can bear it well enough. What care they for losing the personal perfection of the saints? What care they for losing God's favour, or presence? They lived joyfully without him on earth, and why should it be so grievous to be without him hereafter? What care they for being deprived of spiritual affections and enjoyment? They never tasted sweetness in things of that nature. Or what care they for being deprived of the fellowship of angels and saints? They could spare their company in this world, and why may they not be without it in the world to come? To make sinners therefore understand the nature of their future

condition, I will show them why the loss of heaven will then be intolerable, and most tormenting to them, though it seem as nothing to them now.

I. The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared and enlarged, to know the worth of what they have lost. Now they lament not their loss of God, because they never knew his excellency; nor the loss of the holy employments and society of heaven, for they were never sensible of their worth. A man who has lost a jewel, and took it but for a common stone, is never troubled at his loss; but when he comes to know what he has lost, then he laments it. Though the understandings of the damned will not then be sanctified, yet will they be cleared from a multitude of errors which now possess them, and mislead them to their ruin. Now they think that their honour with men, their estates, their pleasures, their health and life, are better worth their study and labour, than the things of another world, which they never saw; but when these things which had their hearts, shall have deserted them in their greatest need; when they shall come to know by experience, the things which before they did but read and hear of, they will then be of quite another mind. They are now in a dead sleep, and they dream they are the happiest men in the world, and that the godly are but a company of fools, and that either heaven will be theirs, as surely as another's, or else that they may make shift without it, as they have done here; but when death shall smite these men, and bid them awake, and shall rouse them out of their pleasant dreams, how will they stand up amazed and confounded! How will their judgments be changed in a moment! They that would not see, shall then see, and be ashamed.

Besides, as the understanding of the ungodly will be cleared, so it will be more enlarged, and made more capacious to conceive of the worth of that glory which they have lost. The strength of their apprehensions, as well as the truth of them, will then be increased. What deep apprehensions of the madness of sinning, of the misery of sinners, of the wrath of God, have

those souls that now endure this misery, in comparison of those on earth who do but hear of it! What lively apprehensions of the worth of life has the condemned malefactor, who is going to be executed, in comparison of what he used to have in the time of his prosperity! Much more will the actual privation of eternal blessedness make the damned exceedingly sensible of the greatness of their loss.

II. The consciences of the ungodly will make a close and faithful application of this loss to themselves, a circumstance which will exceedingly aggravate their torment. It will then be no difficult matter for them to say, "This is *my* loss; this is *my* everlasting remediless misery." The want of this self-application is the main cause why they are now so little troubled at their condition; they are with difficulty brought to believe that there is such a state of misery, but more hardly still to believe that this state is likely to be their own. This makes so many sermons to be lost upon them, and all the threatenings and warnings of God to prove in vain. It is a most difficult work to make a proud man know that he is proud,—or a covetous man, that he is covetous,—or an ignorant, erroneous, heretical man, that such is his character; but to make any of these confess their sins, and apply the threatening, and believe themselves the children of wrath, this is to human strength an impossibility. Though we should preach to them as long as we live, we cannot make them believe that their danger is so great; nay, though a man should rise from the dead, and appear to them, and warn them that they come not into the place of torment, and tell them that such and such of their beloved or honourable friends, who did as truly think to be saved as they, are now in hell, and ask in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongues; yet would they not be persuaded by all this; for Christ himself has said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead."

But O! when they shall suddenly find themselves in the land of darkness, when they shall perceive, by

the execution of the sentence, that they are indeed condemned, and see that they are excluded from the presence of God for ever, and feel themselves in the scorching flames, it will then be no such difficult matter to convince them of their misery. This particular application of God's anger to themselves, will then be the easiest thing in the world; then they cannot but know and apply it, whether they will or not.

III. The affections of the ungodly will be more lively and enlarged than they are now. As their judgment will be no longer blinded, nor their consciences stifled and bribed; so their affections will be no longer so stupefied and dead. A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem to them but trifles. When we have shown them everlasting glory and everlasting misery, they are as men half asleep; they scarcely notice what we say. But O! what passionate sensibility, what powerful affections, what pangs of horror, what depth of sorrow will then be seen! O the self-accusing and self-tormenting fury of these lost beings! How will they be God's executioners upon themselves! And let them not think that, if they must torment themselves, they will do well enough, they will have sense enough to ease and favour themselves, and resolution enough to control this violence of their passions. Alas! they little know what passions these will be, and how much beyond the power of their resolutions to command or suppress them! Why have not despairing souls on earth power to refrain from tormenting themselves with continual terrors? It is as easy for them to stop the rivers in their course, or to bound the overflowing waves of the ocean, as to stop the stream of their violent passions, or to restrain those sorrows that overflow their souls. O how much less, then, can those condemned souls, who see the glory before them which they have lost, restrain their heart-rending, self-tormenting passions! You are as stocks or stones under the threatenings of God's wrath, but you will be most tenderly sensible under the execution of it. O how happy would you think yourselves, if you were turned into rocks, or any thing that had

neither sense nor passion! O how happy would you be if you could then feel, as lightly as you were wont to hear; and if you could sleep out the time of execution, as you did the time of the sermons that warned you of it! But ah! your stupidity will then be gone for ever!

IV. The memories of the ungodly will be active and capacious, which will cause these violent passions to be ever working.

I will here briefly notice some of these considerations which will thus feed the anguish of the damned.

1. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory which they have lost. O! if it had been that which they could have spared, it had been a small matter; or if it had been a loss which might be repaired; if it had been health, or wealth, or friends, or life, it had been nothing; but to lose that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"—the thought of this will drink up their spirits.

2. It will torment them to think of the possibility there once was of their obtaining the glory they have now lost. Then they will remember, "If I had acted my part wisely and faithfully, I might now have been in possession of the heavenly inheritance; I might have been among yonder blessed saints, who am now tormented with these damned fiends! The Lord did set before me life and death, and having chosen death, I deserve to suffer it. The prize was once held out before me: if I had run well, I might have obtained it; if I had striven, I might have got the mastery; if I had fought valiantly, I might have won the crown!"

3. It will torment them to remember not only the possibility, but the probability, there once was of their obtaining the glory they have now lost. It will wound them to the quick to think, "Why, I had once the influence of the Spirit ready to assist me. I was fully purposed to be another man, to cleave to Christ, and to forsake the world. I was almost resolved to be wholly for God; I was once even turning from my base seducing lusts; I had cast off my old companions, and was resolved to associate myself with the godly: and

yet I turned back, and lost my hold, and broke my promises, and slacked my purposes. O how fair was I once for heaven! I had almost won the prize, and yet I have lost it. If I had but "followed on to know the Lord," and brought those beginnings to maturity, and blown up the spark of desires and purposes which was kindled in me, I had now been blessed among the saints."

4. It will torment them to remember the fair opportunities which they once had of obtaining this glory, but which they now have lost. To look back upon an age spent in vanity, when their salvation was at stake; to think how many weeks, and months, and years they lost, which, if they had improved, they might now have been happy,—this will sting them to the quick. "Wretch that I was," may the sinner exclaim, "could I find no time to study the work for which I had all my time? Had I no time, amidst all my labours, to labour for eternity? Had I time to eat, and drink, and sleep, and work, and none to seek the salvation of my soul? Had I time for mirth, and sports, and vain discourse, and none for prayer, or meditation on the life to come? Could I take time to look after my estate in the world, and none to try my title to heaven, and to make sure of my spiritual and everlasting welfare? O precious time! whither art thou fled? I had once time enough, and now I shall have no more! I had so much, that I knew not what to do with it. I was fain to devise pastimes, and to talk it away, and trifle it away; and now it is gone, never to return! O the golden hours which I enjoyed! Had I spent but one year of all those years, or but one month of all those months, in earnest examination of Scripture truth, and seeking God with my whole heart, it had now been happy for me. But now my time is past, my days are cut off, my glass is run, my sun is set, and will rise no more. O that I had but one of these years to live over again! O that it were possible to recall one day, one hour of that time! But it is now too late,—alas! too late for ever!"

Thus will the remembrance of the time which they

lost on earth be a continual torment to these condemned souls.

5. It will torment them to remember how often they were persuaded to return, both by ministers in public, and by their godly faithful friends in private. How will every request and exhortation of ministers now be as a fiery dart in the spirit of the poor sinner! How fresh will every sermon come into his mind,—even those which he had forgotten as soon as heard! He even seems still to hear the voice of the minister, and to see his tears. “Oh, how fain would he have had me to escape these torments! How earnestly did he entreat me! With what love and tender compassion did he beseech me! How did his bowels yearn with pity over me, and yet I hardened my heart against all this! How often did he convince me that all was not well with me, and yet I stifled all these convictions!”

Thus will the remembrance of all the means of grace which they ever enjoyed be fuel to feed the flames in their consciences. Oh, that sinners would but think of this, while they sit under the plain instructions and pressing exhortations of a faithful ministry! How dear must they pay for all this, if it do not prevail with them; and how will they wish a thousand times, in the anguish of their souls, that they had either obeyed his doctrine, or had never heard him!

6. It will torment them to remember that God himself condescended to entreat them; that, in fact, all the entreaties of ministers were the entreaties of God. How long did he wait, how freely did he offer, how affectionately did he invite, and how importunately did he solicit them! How did the Spirit continue striving with their hearts, as if he were loath to take a denial! How did Christ importune them, sermon after sermon, and one Sabbath after another, saying, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me!” Oh that thou wouldst hearken to my commandments! “Then should thy peace be as a river, and thy righteousness



as the waves of the sea: though thy sins be as scarlet, I will make them as white as snow." What, sinner! Shall the God of all the earth beseech thee to be happy, beseech thee to have pity upon thine own soul, and wilt thou not regard him?

Oh, how all these passionate pleadings of Christ will transport the damned with self-indignation! How fresh will the remembrance of them be ever in their minds, piercing their souls with renewed torments! Then will they cry out against themselves, Oh, how justly is all this befallen me! I tired out the patience of Christ. I made the God of heaven follow me from my house to the church, from the church to my chamber, till I wearied him with crying unto me, Repent, return! Had the Lord of all the worlds thus to wait on me, and all in vain? Oh, how justly is that patience now turned into fury, which falls upon my soul with irresistible violence!

7. It will torment them to remember on what easy terms they might have escaped from hell, and won heaven. If their work had been to remove mountains, to conquer kingdoms, to fulfil the law to the smallest tittle, then the impossibility would somewhat assuage the rage of their self-accusing conscience. If the conditions of obtaining heaven had been the satisfying of justice for all their transgressions, the suffering of all that the law laid upon them, why, this were nothing but to suffer hell to escape hell. But the conditions were of another nature. The yoke was easy, and the burden light, which Jesus Christ would have laid upon them; his commandments were not grievous. It was but to believe in him as the Saviour of sinners; to repent of our transgressions; to study his will; to renounce all other happiness but that which he procures us, and to take him alone for the chief good; to renounce the world and the flesh, and to submit to his meek and gracious government; to forsake the ways of our own devising, and to walk in his holy ways; to engage ourselves to this by covenant with him, and to continue faithful in that covenant. These were the terms on which they might have enjoyed the kingdom.

And was there any thing unreasonable in all this? Or had they any thing to object against it? Was it a hard bargain to have heaven upon these conditions, when all the price that is required is only our accepting it in that way in which the wisdom of our Lord thinks meet to bestow it?

Oh! when the poor tormented wretch shall look back upon these easy terms which he refused, how it will rend his very heart. "Ah!" exclaims he, "what had all the trouble of duty been, in comparison of the trouble, which I now sustain! Or all the sufferings for Christ and well-doing, in comparison of these sufferings which I must undergo for ever! What if I had spent my days in the strictest life that ever did saint! What if I had lived ever upon my knees! What if I had lost my credit with men, and borne the reproach and scorn of the foolish, and been hated of all men for the sake of Christ! What if I had been imprisoned, or banished, or put to death! Oh! what had all this been, in comparison of the miseries which I now must suffer!"

8. It will torment them to remember for what it was they sold their eternal welfare in heaven. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin with the recompense of reward, which they sacrificed for these pleasures,—how will the vast disproportion astonish them! To think of a few gay hours, a few sweet morsels, a little ease, or low delight to the flesh, the applauding breath of mortal men, or the possession of so much gold on earth; and then to think of everlasting glory,—how immense will appear the difference between them; to think that this is all he had for his soul, his God, his hopes of everlasting blessedness,—how will these thoughts tear his very heart! Then will he exclaim against his folly, "O for how small a matter have I parted with my happiness! I had but a dream of delight for my hopes of heaven; and now that I am awakened, it is all vanished. Where are now my honours and attendance? Who applauds me, or trumpets forth my praises? My pleasures are now turned to gall and

wormwood; and is this all that I had for the inestimable treasure which I have lost! Oh! what a mad exchange did I make! What if I had gained all the world, and lost my soul? Would it have been a profitable exchange? But, alas! how small a part of the world was it, for which I gave up my part in glory!" O that sinners would think of this, when they are swimming in the delights of flesh, and studying to be rich and honourable in the world; when they are desperately venturing upon known transgressions, and sinning against the checks of conscience!

9. It will torment them to think that all this was their own doing, and that they wilfully procured their own destruction. Had they been forced to sin, whether they would or not, or if they were punished for another man's transgressions, or if any other had been the chief author of their ruin, it would much abate the rage of their consciences. But to think, that it was the choice of their own wills, and that none in the world could have forced them to sin against their wills, this will be a cutting thought to their hearts. "What!" will the sinner exclaim, "had I not enemies enough in the world, that I was an enemy to myself! God would neither give the devil nor the world so much power over me, as to force me to commit the least transgression. If I had not consented, their temptations would have been in vain: they could not entice me; it was I myself that yielded and did the evil." Thus will it agonize the hearts of poor sinners to remember that they were the cause of their own undoing; and that they wilfully and obstinately persisted in their rebellion, and were volunteers in the service of the devil.

Lastly, It will wound their consciences still deeper when they remember, that their damnation was not only their own doing, but that they were at so much cost and pains for the accomplishment of it. What great undertakings did they engage in to effect their own ruin! To resist God, to quench the Spirit, to overcome the power of mercies, judgments, and the word itself, to silence conscience, to drown reason, all this

they undertook and performed. Oh, the labour and suffering it costs poor sinners to be damned! Sobriety they might have had at a cheaper rate, with health and ease, yet they will rather have gluttony and drunkenness, with poverty and shame, and sickness. Contentment they might have had with ease and delight, yet will they rather have covetousness and ambition, though it cost them study, and care, and fears, and labour of body and mind, and a continual unquietness and distraction of spirit, and often a shameful overthrow at the last. Though anger torments, and revenge and envy consume their spirits; though uncleanness destroys their bodies and estates, and reputation, yet will they do and suffer all this, rather than suffer their souls to be saved. Oh, how will the review of this feed the flames of hell!

Thus have I shown you some of those thoughts which will aggravate the misery of sinners through the ages of eternity. Oh! that God would persuade thee who readest these words, to take up these thoughts now seasonably and soberly for the prevention of that inconceivable calamity, that so thou mayest not be forced, in despite of thyself, to take them up in hell as thy own tormentors.



### SECTION III.

*They shall lose all things that are comfortable on Earth, as well as Heaven.*

HAVING shown you these considerations which will aggravate their misery, I shall next show you some additional losses which will still further augment it; for as godliness has the promise both of this life, and of that which is to come; and as God has said, that if we seek first his kingdom, and righteousness, all other things shall be added to them; so also are the ungodly threatened, with the loss both of spiritual and of temporal blessings; and because they sought not first Christ's kingdom and righteousness they shall lose both them and that which they did seek. If they

could but have kept their present enjoyments, they would not have cared much for the loss of heaven. But catching at the shadow, and losing the substance, they now find that they have lost both; and that when they rejected Christ, they rejected all things. If they had lost and forsaken all for Christ, they would have found all again in him, for he would have been all in all to them. But now that they have forsaken Christ for other things, they shall lose Christ, and that also for which they forsook him.

But I will mention more particularly some of their other losses, which will aggravate their loss of heaven.

I. They shall lose their present presumptuous belief of their interest in the favour of God, and in the merits and sufferings of Christ. This false belief now supports their spirits, and fortifies them against the fears of the wrath to come. As true faith affords the soul well-grounded support and consolation, and enables us to look to eternity with undaunted courage; so a false faith affords false comfort, and abates the trouble of the consideration of judgment and damnation. But alas! this is a mere palliative, a deceitful comfort; and what will ease their trouble, when it is gone? When they can believe no longer, they will be quieted no longer, and rejoice no longer. If a man be near to the greatest mischief, and yet believe that he is in safety, his conceit may make him as cheerful as if all were well, till his misery comes, and then both his conceit and comfort will vanish together. An ungrounded persuasion of happiness is a poor cure for real misery. When the mischief comes, it will cure the misbelief; but that belief can neither prevent nor cure the mischief. If no more were necessary to make a man happy but to believe he is so, or shall be so, happiness would be far commoner than it is likely to be.

I would be very loath to weaken the faith of the meanest Christian, or to persuade any man that his faith is false, when it is true. God forbid that I should disparage that precious grace which hath the stamp of the Spirit; or trouble the soul which Christ would have comforted! But I must needs in faithfulness tell

thee, that the confident belief of their good estate, and of the pardon of their sins, which the careless, unholy, and unhumbled sometimes boast of, will prove in the end a soul-damning delusion. There is none of this believing in hell; nor any persuasion of pardon or happiness, nor any boasting of their honesty, nor any justifying of themselves. This was but Satan's stratagem, that, being blindfold, they might follow him the more boldly; but then he will uncover their eyes, and they shall see where they are.

II. With their loss of heaven they will lose also all their hopes. In this life, though they were threatened with the wrath of God, yet their hope of escaping it did bear up their hearts; and when they were wounded by the terrors of the word, they quieted themselves with their groundless hopes; but then they shall part with their hopes and Heaven together. So strong are many men's hopes, that they are represented as disputing with Christ himself in judgment, and pleading their eating and drinking in his presence, their preaching in his name, and casting out devils (and these are more plausible arguments than our baptism, and common profession, and having the name of Christians;) they will even stoutly deny that ever they neglected Christ in hunger, or thirst, or nakedness, or prison, till he himself confute them with the sentence of their everlasting condemnation. Oh, the sad state of these men, when they must bid farewell to all their hopes;—when their hopes shall all perish with them! “The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.”

Methinks it is the most doleful spectacle that this world affords, to see an ungodly person dying, and to think of his soul and his hopes departing together, and with what a sad change he shall presently appear in another world. Oh! if one could but speak with that hopeless soul, and ask it, What! Are you now as confident of salvation as you were wont to be? Do you now hope to be saved as soon as the most godly? what a sad answer would he return! The poor sinner is like Korah, Dathan, and their companions, who,

while they were confident in their rebellion against the Lord, were suddenly swallowed up, and their hopes with them; or like a criminal on the gallows, who has a strong expectation that he will receive a pardon, and so hopes and hopes till he drops into eternity. Such a sudden overthrow of their hopes will all unregenerate sinners receive.

O that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time! If thou who art reading these lines be one of this description, I do here as a friend beseech thee, that, as thou wouldst not have all thy hopes deceive thee, when thou shalt most need them, thou presently try them, whether they will stand the test of Scripture; and if thou find them unsound, let them go, whatsoever sorrow this may cost thee. Rest not till thou canst give a reason of all thy hopes; till thou canst prove that they are the hopes which grace and not nature only hath wrought; that they are grounded upon Scripture promises and Scripture evidences; that they purify thy heart; that they quicken thy endeavours in godliness; that they make thee set lighter by all things on earth, because thou hast such hopes of higher possessions; that thou art willing to have them tried, and fearful of being deceived: if thou be sure that thy hopes are such as these, God forbid that I should speak a word against them, or discourage thee from proceeding to hope thus to the end. No, I would rather persuade thee to go on in the strength of the Lord; and whatever men or devils, or thy own unbelieving heart shall say against it, go on, and hold fast thy confidence, and be sure thy hope shall never make thee ashamed. But if thy hope be not of this spiritual nature, and if thou art able to give no good reason why thou hopest, and hast not one sound evidence of a saving work of grace upon thy soul, delay not an hour; but presently cast away these hopes, that thou mayest get into a capacity of having better in their stead.

III. With this loss of heaven, they will lose all that false peace of conscience, which makes their present life comparatively easy. The loss of this must neces-

sarily follow the loss of their false hopes of heaven. When presumption is gone, peace cannot tarry. Who that now sees how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, would think that they must very shortly lie down in everlasting flames? They lie down, sleep, and rise as quietly, they eat and drink as heartily, they go about their work as cheerfully, they talk as pleasantly, as if nothing ailed them, or as if they were as far from danger as an obedient believer. "As in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage, till the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away," so will the coming of Christ, and so will the coming of their particular judgment be; "for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." O cruel peace, which ends in such a war! Reader, if this be thy own case; if thou hast no other peace in thy conscience than this ungrounded, self-created peace, I beseech thee to cast it from thee. As I would not have any humble gracious soul to vex his conscience needlessly, or to disquiet and discompose his spirits by trouble of his own making, or to unfit himself for duty, or to interrupt his comfortable communion with God, so would I not have a miserable sinner, who lives in daily and hourly danger of dropping into hell, to be as quiet and cheerful as if all were well with him. It is both unseemly and unsafe; more unseemly than to see a man go laughing to the gallows, and more unsafe than to be making merry when the enemy is entering our habitations. Men's first peace is usually a false peace; it is a second peace which is brought into the soul upon the casting out of the first, that will stand good. By nature, the soul of every man is Satan's garrison; all is at peace with such a man, till Christ comes. When Christ storms his heart, he breaks the peace; he gives it terrible alarms of judgment and hell; he batters it with the ordnance of his threatenings and terrors; he sets all in a combustion of fear and sorrow, till he forces it to yield to his



grace and mercy, and take him for the governor, and Satan is cast out; and then he establishes a firm and lasting peace. If, therefore, thou art yet but in that first peace, and thy heart was never yet either taken by storm, or delivered up freely to Jesus Christ, never think that thy peace will endure. Can the soul have peace which is at enmity with Christ, which thinks his government too severe, and his conditions too hard? What peace can there be, till thou hast cast away thy wickedness, and made thy peace with God through Christ? Read what God himself saith, "There is no peace to the wicked." And hath he said it; and shall it not stand? Sinner, though thou mayst now harden and fortify thy heart against fear, and grief, and trouble, yet as God is true, they will batter down thy proud and fortified spirit, and seize upon it, and drive thee to amazement.

IV. With their loss of heaven, they will lose all their carnal mirth. They will themselves say, as Solomon does, of their laughter, "It is mad;" and of their mirth, "What doeth it?" Their witty jests will then be ended, and their merry tales all told. "Their mirth was but as the crackling of thorns under a pot." It made a great blaze and unseemly noise for a little while, but it was presently gone, and will return no more. They scorned to entertain any serious thoughts; to talk of death and judgment was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth; they could not endure to think of their sin or danger, because these thoughts did sadden their spirits. They knew not what it was to weep for sin, or to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They could laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away melancholy thoughts. They thought, if they should meditate, and pray, and mourn, as the godly do, their lives would be a continual misery, and it would be enough to make them run mad. Alas, poor souls, what a misery then will that life be, where you shall have nothing but sorrow, intense, heart-piercing, multiplied sorrow; where you shall have neither the joys of the saints, nor your own former joys? Do you think

there is one merry heart in hell, or one joyful countenance, or jesting tongue? You now cry, "A little mirth is worth much sorrow;" but surely a little godly sorrow, which would have ended in eternal joy, had been of more worth than a great deal of your foolish mirth, which will end in eternal sorrow.

V. They will lose all their sensual pleasures and delights. That which they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their god, that they must lose as well as heaven and God himself. They shall then, in spite of themselves, fulfil that command, which here they would not be persuaded to obey,—“Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” O! what a fall will the proud ambitious man have from the top of his honours! As his dust and bones will not be known from the dust and bones of the poorest beggars, so neither will his soul be honoured or favoured any more than theirs. How many of the great, and rich, and noble, and learned, will be for ever shut out from the presence of Christ! “Not many wise men after the flesh,” says Paul, “not many mighty, not many noble are called;” and if they be not called, neither will they be glorified. They shall be shut out of their magnificent and sumptuous buildings, their elegant chambers, with their costly hangings, their downy beds, and easy couches. They shall no longer enjoy their spacious walks, their curious gardens, adorned with rich variety of beauteous fruits and flowers; their rich pastures, and pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvests, and flocks and herds. Their tables will no longer be spread and furnished with variety of tempting dishes, to please their appetites to the full. The rich man there fares not deliciously, neither shall he wear his purple and fine linen. The gorgeous well-drest gallants, shall then be in quite a different garb. Surely our voluptuous youths must leave behind them their cards and dice, their theatres and balls, and all their former pleasant sports;—they shall then spend their time, not in such pastimes as these, but in more sad employment. Oh! the doleful meeting that lustful wantons will have with each

other in hell! There they will have no more comfort in each other's company, than lewd companions have in being hanged together on the same gallows. How will it even cut them to the heart, to look each other in the face, and remember the sensual pleasures for which they now must pay so dear! What direful greeting will there then be! What cursing the day that ever they saw the faces of one another, remembering all their lewdness, to the aggravation of their torment! O that sinners would consider this in the midst of their jollity and pleasure. Who would spend so many days and years, and be at so much cost and pains, and all to please the flesh for a moment, and, in the mean time, neglect their precious souls, and that state in which they must exist for ever? Who would be at such pains for that pleasure which dies in the enjoying, and is gone almost as soon as come; and when we have most need of comfort, will be so far from following us as our happiness, that it will be perpetual fuel to the flames which shall torment us?

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *The Greatness of the Torments of the Damned in Hell.*

HAVING thus showed you how great their loss is, who are excluded from the heavenly rest, and how it will be aggravated by those additional losses which will accompany it, I shall next show you the greatness of those positive sufferings which they will have to endure. That there are, besides the loss of happiness, actual sensible torments for the damned, is a matter beyond all doubt; and that they will be exceedingly great, will appear by the following arguments.

I. The principal author of them is God himself. As it was no less than God whom the sinner had offended, so it is no less than God who will punish them for their offences. He has prepared torments for his enemies. The breath of his indignation will

kindle the flames. His continued anger will be ever devouring them. O! if it were but a creature with whom they had to do, they might hear it; for the penalty would correspond with the infirmity of him that inflicted it. But woe to them that fall under the strokes of the Almighty! They shall feel to their sorrow, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It were nothing in comparison of this, if all the world were against them, or if the strength of all the creatures were united to inflict the penalty. They had now rather venture on the displeasure of God, than displease a landlord, a master, a friend, a neighbour, or their own flesh; but then they will wish a thousand times in vain, that they had lost the favour of all the world, and been hated of all men, provided they had not lost the favour of God; for as there is no life like his favour, so there is no death like his displeasure. O what a consuming fire is his wrath! If it be kindled here, and that but a little, how do we wither before it, "as the grass that is cut down before the sun!" How soon does our strength turn to weakness, and our beauty to deformity! Churches are rooted up, commonwealths are overthrown, kingdoms depopulated, armies destroyed. Who, in short, can stand before his indignation? Even the "heavens and the earth will melt at his presence;" and when he speaks the word, at the great day of account, they will be burnt up before him as a scroll in the fire. The flames do not so easily run through the dry stubble, as the wrath of God will feed upon poor sinners. O! they that could not bear a prison, or a gibbet, or fire for Christ,—no, nor scarcely even a few taunts from the mouths of the ignorant,—how will they now bear the devouring fire of his anger!

II. The state of torment is purposely ordained for the glorifying of the attribute of God's justice. The glorifying of the two great attributes of mercy and justice, is intended most eminently for the life to come. When God will then purposely glorify his mercy, he will do it in a way that is now incredible, and beyond

the comprehension of the saints who will enjoy it ; so also, when he shall then purposely manifest his justice, it will appear indeed to be the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for rebellious sinners. Oh, woe to the soul that is thus set up as a mark, for the wrath of the Almighty to shoot at ; and as a bush that must burn in the flames of his jealousy, yet never be consumed !

III. The torments of the damned must needs be extreme, because they are the effect of Divine vengeance. Then will he be avenged for every mercy abused, for his creatures consumed in luxury and excess, for every hour of mis-spent time, for the neglect of his word, for the profanation of his ordinances, and the neglect of his worship, for the breaking of his Sabbaths, and the grieving of his Spirit, for the taking of his name in vain, for unmerciful neglect of his servants in distress.

What a doleful case will the wretched creature be in, when he shall thus set the heart of his Creator against him ; when “ he that made him will not have mercy on him ; and he that formed him will show him no favour.” How overwhelming a threatening is that in the Book of Proverbs, “ Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me ; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord : they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” Oh ! will it not be a terrible thing to wretched souls when they shall cry out for mercy, yea, for one drop of water, and God shall mock them instead of relieving them ? I know when the Scripture speaks of God’s

laughing and mocking, it is not to be understood literally, but after the manner of men; yet this may show us, that it will be such an act of God, which he cannot more fitly conceive or express under any other notion or name than these, and thus it shows us the extreme severity of the sinner's misery.

IV. Consider who shall be God's executioners of their torment. First, Satan. He that was here so successful in drawing them from Christ, will then be the instrument of punishing them, for yielding to his temptations. It was a fearful sight to see the man possessed, who was bound with chains, and lived among the tombs; but, alas! that was nothing in comparison with the torment to which Satan will subject sinners in hell, as the reward he will give them for all their service; for rejecting the commands of God, forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. Ah! if they had served Christ as faithfully as they did Satan, and had forsaken all for love to him, he would have given them a better reward. Secondly, It is most just also, that they should there be their own tormentors, that they may see that their whole destruction is of themselves; that they who were wilfully the meritorious cause, should also be an efficient cause of their own sufferings; and then whom can they complain of but themselves? They will be no more able to cease their self-tormenting, than men that we see in a deep melancholy, who will by no arguments be diverted from their sorrows.

V. Consider that their torment will be universal, not in one part only, but as all have joined in the sin, so must all partake of the punishment. The soul, as it was the chief in sinning, shall also be the chief in suffering; and as it is of a more spiritual and excellent nature than the body, so will its torments far exceed our present bodily sufferings. And as the joys of the soul do far surpass all sensual pleasures, so will the pains of the soul surpass all corporeal pains.

Besides, it is not only a soul, but a sinful soul that must suffer. The guilt which remains upon it, will make it fit for the wrath of God to work upon. Fire

will not burn, except the fuel be combustible ; but if the wood be dry, or if it light upon straw, how fiercely will it then burn ! Now, the guilt of his former sins will be as fuel to the flames.

And as the soul, so also must the body bear its part. That body, which must needs be pleased, whatever become of its eternal safety, shall now pay for all its unlawful pleasures. That body which was so tenderly cherished, so highly pampered, what must it now endure ! How are its haughty looks brought down ! How little will the flames regard its beauty ! Those eyes, which were wont to be delighted with curious sights, and to feed themselves upon beauteous objects, shall then see nothing but what will amaze and terrify them ;—above them an angry, sin-avenging God, and those saints whom they scorned, enjoying the glory which they have lost ; and around them will be only devils and damned souls. Those ears which used to be delighted with music, shall hear the shrieks and cries of their lost companions ; children crying out against their parents, that set them an example of evil, but did not teach them the fear of the Lord ; husbands crying out against their wives, and wives against their husbands ; masters and servants, ministers and people, magistrates and subjects, mutually charging their misery upon each other, for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent and formal, when they should have plainly warned one another of their misery and danger. Thus will soul and body be companions in woe.

VI. Consider that in the midst of their torments they will have no comfort left to help to mitigate them. In this world, when conscience began to trouble their peace, they had comforts enough at hand to relieve them. Their carnal friends were all ready to speak comfort to them, and promise them that all would at last be well with them ; but now they have not a word of comfort either for them or themselves. Formerly they had their business, their company, their mirth, to drive away their fears ; they could drink away their sorrows, or play them away, or sleep them

away, or at least, time did wear them away, but now all these remedies are vanished. They had a hard presumptuous, unbelieving heart, which was a wall to defend them against trouble of mind; but now their experience has banished it, and left them naked and exposed to the fury of the flames. Yea, formerly Satan himself was their comforter, and would unsay all that the minister or the Bible said against them. As he said to our first mother, "Ye shall not surely die," so doth he now say, "God is merciful. Who would lose his present pleasures for fear of that which he never saw? Or if there be a hell, why should you fear it? Are not you Christians, and shall you not be saved by Christ? Was not his blood shed for you?" Thus, as the Spirit of Christ is the comforter of the saints, so Satan is the comforter of the wicked; for he knows if doubts or fears should begin to trouble them, they would bethink themselves of their danger, and so escape it. Never was a thief more careful lest he should awake the inmates when he is robbing a house, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner. But when sinners are dead, and he has caught his prey, and his stratagem has taken effect, then he has done flattering and comforting them. While the sight of sin and misery might have helped to save them, he took all the pains he could to conceal it from their eyes; but when it is too late, and no hope is left, he will make them see and feel it to the utmost. Oh, which way will the poor forlorn sinner then look for comfort? They that drew him into the snare, and promised him safety, do now forsake him, and are forsaken themselves.

VII. But the great aggravation of this misery will be its eternity. When a thousand millions of ages are past, their torments will be as fresh as the day they began. If there were any hope of an end of their punishment, it would ease them to foresee it; but when they know it must last forever, that thought is intolerable;—much more will the misery itself be. O, what happy men would they think themselves, if they might have lain still in their graves! How



ready will they be to cry, "O, that I might but there lie down again! What a mercy would it now be to die! O, death, whither art thou now gone? Now come and cut off this doleful life! O, that these pains would break my heart, and end my existence! Alas! that I ever had a being!" Such groans will the thoughts of eternity wring from their hearts. O, what a difference is there between the length of their pleasures and of their pains! The one continued but a moment, the other will endure through eternity. Oh, that sinners would lay this to heart! Remember how time is almost gone. Thou art standing all this while at the door of eternity, and death is waiting to open the door, and usher thee in. Soon thy days and nights shall end; thy thoughts and cares, thy pleasures and pains, shall all be swallowed up by eternity; thou shalt enter on that state which shall never be changed. As the joys of heaven are beyond our conception, so also are the pains of hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment.

But some perhaps will say, "I will never believe that God will thus torment his creatures. What! to delight in their torture, and that for everlasting ages, and all this for the faults of a short time! It is incredible. How can this consist with the infinity of his mercy? I would not thus torment the worst enemy I have in the world, and yet my mercifulness is nothing to God's."

I do not, indeed, wonder that thou art loath to believe such terrible tidings to thy soul, which, if they were believed and apprehended by thee according to their weight, would set thee trembling, day and night, in the anguish of horror. But tell me, Dost thou believe the Scripture to be the word of God? And darest thou give the lie to the God of heaven, and accuse him of speaking that which shall not come to pass, and that in such absolute threats and plain expressions? But if thou darest not stand to this, but dost believe Scripture both to be the word of God and to be true, then I shall presently convince thee of the reality of these eternal torments. Wilt thou believe

if an apostle should tell thee? Why hear what Jude says. He speaks of the "vengeance of eternal fire, and the blackness of darkness forever." Or wilt thou believe if thou have it from an apostle that had been wrapt up in revelations into the third heaven, and saw things unutterable? Why, take it then from Paul: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And, again, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Or wilt thou believe it on the testimony of the beloved apostle who saw it in vision? Why, he tells us, "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and they have no rest day nor night; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Or, wilt thou believe it from the mouth of Christ, himself the Judge? Why, then, he says, "As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world: The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." In other places he speaks of being "cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched,—where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And, in giving an account of the last judgment, he says, "Then shall the King say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

What sayest thou to all this? If thou wilt not be-

lieve Christ and his apostles, I know not whom thou wilt believe. Only let me tell thee, the time is at hand when thou wilt easily believe, and that without any preaching or arguing. When thou seest the great and terrible day, and hearest the condemning sentence passed, and art thyself thrust down to hell, then thou wilt believe, and never doubt again. Surely the devil, who dissuades thee from believing, does himself "believe and tremble."

And whereas thou thinkest that God is more merciful than to punish sinners so, why surely he knows best the extent of his own mercifulness. His mercy will not cross his truth. Cannot God be infinite in mercy, unless he save the wilful and rebellious? Is a judge unmerciful for condemning malefactors? Mercy and justice have their several objects. Thousands of humble, believing, obedient souls shall know to their eternal comfort, that God is merciful, though the refusers of his grace shall lie under his justice. God will then force thy conscience to confess it in hell, that he who condemned thee was yet merciful to thee. Was it no mercy to make thee a reasonable creature, and to endure thy many years' provocations, and to wait upon thee, desiring and entreating thy repentance and return? Was it no mercy to have the Son of God, with all his blood and merits freely offered to thee, if thou wouldst but accept him to govern and to save thee? Nay, when thou hadst neglected and refused Christ, not once, or twice only, but hundreds of times, that God should yet follow thee with invitations from day to day? Wilt thou wilfully refuse mercy to thy last hour, and then cry out that God will not be so unmerciful as to condemn thee? Thy conscience will smite thee for thy madness, and tell thee, that God was merciful in all this, though such as thou do perish for their impenitence and unbelief. Yea, the sense of the greatness of his mercy will then perhaps be a great part of thy torment.

And whereas thou thinkest the pain to be greater than the offence, that is, because thou art not a competent judge. Thou knowest what pain is, but thou

knowest not the thousandth part of the evil of sin. Shall not the righteous Judge of the world do justly? Nay, it is no more than thou thyself didst choose. Did not God set before thee life and death; and tell thee, if thou wouldst accept of Christ, and renounce thy lusts, thou shouldst then have eternal life; and if thou wouldst not have Christ, but the world or the flesh to rule over thee, thou shouldst then endure eternal torments? Did not he offer thee thy choice; yea, and entreat thee to choose aright? And dost thou now cry out of severity, when thou hast but the consequence of thy own wilful choice? But it is not thy accusing God of severity that will serve thy turn. Instead of procuring thy escape, or the mitigation of thy torments, this will but make thy burden the more heavy.

And whereas thou sayest that thou wouldst not so torment thy own enemy, I answer, There is no reason why thou shouldst; for is it all one to offend a crawling worm of the earth, and to offend the eternal glorious God? Thou hast no absolute dominion over thine enemy, and there may be some fault in thyself as well as in him; but with God and us the case is contrary.

But methinks I hear the obstinate sinner desperately resolving,—“Well, if I must be damned, there is no remedy. Rather than live so precisely as the Scripture requires, I will put it to the venture: I will escape as well as my neighbours, and as the most of the world, and we will even bear it as well as we can.” Alas! poor creature! Didst thou but know what it is that thou dost so boldly venture on, I dare say, thou wouldst sleep this night but very unquietly. Wilt thou leave thyself no room for hope? Art thou such an implacable enemy to Christ and thy own soul? And dost thou indeed think that thou canst bear the wrath of God, and endure so easily eternal torments? Yet let me entreat thee, before thou dost pass this resolution, to lend me thine attention to a few questions, and weigh them with the reason of a man; and

if then thou dost think that thou canst bear these pains, I will give thee over, and say no more.

1. Who art thou that thou shouldst bear the wrath of God? Art thou a god, or art thou a man? What is thy strength to undergo so much? Is it not as the strength of wax to resist the fire, or as chaff to the wind, or as the dust before the fierce whirlwind? Was he not as stout a man as thyself, who cried to God, "Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro; and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?" If thy strength were as iron, and thy bones as brass, yet couldst thou not bear the wrath of the Almighty. If thy foundation were as the earth, and thy power as the heavens, yet wouldst thou perish at the breath of his indignation.

2. If thou art able to wrestle with the indignation of the Almighty, why dost thou tremble at the signs of his power and wrath? Art thou not afraid when the thunder rolls in thy ears, and the lightnings flash in thy eyes, rending in pieces the mighty oaks, and tearing down the strongest buildings? If thou be in a place where the plague rages so that it cuts off many thousands in a week, does it not astonish thee, to see men, who were well a few days before, thrown by heaps into the grave? If thou hadst stood by when Pharaoh and his people were so strangely plagued, and at last drowned together in the sea; or when the earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their companies, and the people fled away at their cry, lest the earth should swallow them up also; or when Elijah brought fire from heaven to consume the captains and their companies, would not any of these sights have daunted thy spirit? How then wilt thou bear the plagues of hell?

3. If thou be so strong, and thy heart so stout, as to set at nought the wrath of God, why do those trivial sufferings which befall thee here so dismay thee? If thou have but a fit of toothache, or of gout, or of the stone, what groans dost thou utter? The house is filled with thy complaints. If thou lose but a leg or an arm; if thou lose but a friend; if thou lose but thine estate, and fall into poverty, and beggary, and dis-

grace,—how heavily dost thou bear any one of these calamities? And yet all these accumulated together, will one day be accounted happiness, in comparison of the misery which is suffered in hell. Alas! how many boasters like thyself have I seen made to stoop and retract their words! When God let out but a little of his wrath, that Pharaoh who before asked, “Who is the Lord that I should obey him?” changed his tone, and cried, “I have sinned.”

4. If thy stout spirit make so light of hell, why does the prospect of death so much affright thee? Didst thou never find the thoughts of death fill thy mind with fear and dread? Wast thou never in any disease wherein thou didst receive the sentence of death? If thou never wast, thou wilt be ere long; and then, when thy physician shall tell thee there is no hope, Oh, how cold will it strike to thy heart! Why else is death to men the king of terrors? and why do the stoutest champions then abate their courage? They who had the same spirits and language as thou now hast, and made as light of all the threatenings of the word, yet when they see they are going into another world, how pale do they look! how faintly do they speak! how dolefully do they complain and groan! Oh but the grave would be accounted a palace or a paradise, in comparison of that place of torment which thou desperately slightest.

5. If all this be nothing, go try thy strength by some corporal torment. As Bilney, before he went to the stake, would first try his finger in the candle, so do thou. Hold thy finger awhile in the fire, and see whether thou canst endure the fire of hell. If it be an intolerable thing to suffer the heat of the fire for a year, or a day, or an hour, what will it be to suffer ten thousand times more for ever in hell? If thou canst not endure such things as these, how wilt thou endure the eternal flames?

6. If thou be so fearless of eternal misery, why is the least foretaste of it so terrible? Didst thou never feel such a thing as a tormenting conscience? Didst thou never see and speak with a man who was

wounded in his spirit, and was near despair? How burdensome was life! The sight of friends, or house, or estate, which refreshes others, is a trouble to them: they feel no sweetness in meat or drink; they are at once weary of life, and fearful of death. Now, what is the matter with these men? If the misery of the damned itself can be endured, why cannot they endure those little sparks of divine wrath?

Lastly, Let me ask thee, if the wrath of God is to be made so light of as thou dost, why did the Son of God himself make so great a matter of it? When he, who was perfectly innocent, had taken upon him the payment of our debt, and stood in our room, and bore that punishment which we deserved, it made him sweat "great drops of blood:" it made him, who is the Lord of life, cry out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:" it made him exclaim upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surely, if any one could have borne these sufferings, it was Jesus Christ. He had a higher measure of strength to bear them than thou hast. Do you think to find that tolerable to you, which was so terrible to Christ?

Thus I have shown you somewhat of their misery, who lose the rest prepared for the saints. And now, O sinner, I demand thy resolution. What use wilt thou make of all this? Shall it be all lost upon thee? Or wilt thou consider it in good earnest? Thou hast cast by many a warning from God, wilt thou do so by this also? Take heed what thou doest, and how thou so resolvest. God will not always stand warning and threatening. The hand of vengeance is lifted up, the blow is coming, and woe to him, whoever he be, on whom it falls. Little thinkest thou how near thou standest to thy eternal state, and how near thou art to the pit of hell. Wilt thou throw by the book, and say, "It speaks of nothing but hell and damnation?" Thus thou usest also to complain of the faithful minister; but wouldst thou not have us tell thee of these things? Wouldst thou have us be guilty of the blood of thy soul, by keeping silent as to that which God

has charged us upon pain of death to make known? Wouldst thou perish in ease and quietness, and have us to perish with thee, rather than to awake thee, or displease thee, by speaking the truth? Are these things true, or are they not? If they were not true, I would heartily join with you against any minister who should offer to preach them, and to frighten poor people when there is no cause. But if every word of these threatenings be the word of God, and if they be as true as thou livest and readest this, how great the folly that would not hear them and consider them! Is not this doctrine fit for thee to hear? Indeed, if thou wert past hope of escaping it, then it were vain to tell thee of hell; it might be better to let thee enjoy a few cheerful hours whilst thou mayest; but as long as thou art on this side of the grave, there is hope of thy recovery, and therefore all means must be used to awake thee from thy lethargy. Oh, that some Jonah would cry in your ears, "Yet a few days, and rebellious sinners shall be destroyed;" till you were brought to fall down on your knees in sackcloth and in ashes! Oh, that some John the Baptist would make proclamation, "Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire!" Oh, that some son of thunder, who could speak as Paul, till the hearers tremble, were now to warn you to flee from the wrath to come! Alas! as terribly as you think I speak, yet it is not the thousandth part of what thou must feel, if thou remain unconverted; for what heart can conceive, or what tongue can utter the agonies of those souls that are under the wrath of God?



## CHAPTER II.

REPREHENDING THE GENERAL NEGLECT OF THE  
HEAVENLY REST, AND EXCITING TO DILIGENCE IN  
SEEKING IT.

## SECTION I.

*Reprehension of different Classes for their Neglect  
of the Heavenly Rest.*

I COME now to the second use, which I shall make of this doctrine of rest. If there be so glorious a rest for the saints, why is there no more earnest seeking after it in the world? One would think that a man who but once heard of such unspeakable glory, and believed what he heard to be true, would be transported with the vehemency of his desires after it, and would almost forget to eat or drink, and would care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing else, but how to get assurance and possession of this treasure! And yet people who hear of it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their creed, do as little mind it, or care or labour for it, and as much forget and disregard it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word that they hear. I shall apply this more particularly to the reproof of four sorts of men.

I. This subject reproves worldly-minded men, who are so taken up in seeking the things below, that they have neither heart nor time to seek this rest. May I not well say to them, as Paul to the Galatians in another case, "Foolish sinners! who hath bewitched you?" Would not any man wonder, who has the spiritual use of reason, to see what insatiable pursuit of fleshly pleasures there is among men, whilst they look upon the praises of God, which is the joy of angels, as a tiresome burden! What unwearied diligence

is there in raising their posterity, in enlarging their possessions, in gathering a little silver or gold, while in the meantime their judgment is drawing near; and yet how it shall go with them then, or how they shall live eternally, never puts them to the trouble of an hour's serious consideration! What is the excellency of this earth, that it has so many suitors and admirers? What has it done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed, and painfully sought after, while Christ and heaven stand by, and few regard them? Or, what will the world do for them for the time to come? The common entrance into it, is through anguish and sorrow. The journey through it, is with continual care, and labour, and grief. The passage out of it, is with the greatest sharpness and sadness of all. What, then, causes men so much to follow it? O sinful, unreasonable, bewitched men! Will mirth and pleasure stick close to you? Will gold and worldly glory prove fast friends to you in the time of your greatest need? Will they hear your cries in the day of your calamity? If a man should cry in the hour of death, "Oh, riches, or honour, now help us!" will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you to another world, and bribe the judge, and bring you off clear, or purchase you a mansion among the blessed? Why, then, did the rich man want a drop of water to cool his tongue? Or, are the sweet morsels of present delight and honour, of more worth than the eternal rest? And will they recompense the loss of that enduring treasure? Ah, deceitful world! how often have we heard thy faithfulest servants complaining at last, "Oh, the world has deceived and undone me! It flattered me in my prosperity, but now it turns me off at death in my necessity! Ah, if I had as faithfully served Christ as I have served it, he would not thus have cast me off, nor have left me thus comfortless and hopeless in the depth of misery!" Thus, do the dearest friends and favourites of the world complain at last of its deceitfulness, or rather of their own self-deluding folly; and yet succeeding sinners will take no warning.

II. This subject reproves the profane, ungodly, presumptuous multitude, who will not be persuaded to be at so much pains for salvation, as to perform the common outward duties of religion. If they have the gospel preached in the town where they dwell, it may be they will give a hearing to it one part of the day, and stay at home the other. How few are there in a whole town who will either be at the cost or pains to procure a minister, or travel a few miles to hear abroad, though they will go many miles to the market for provisions for their bodies. The king of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with them, and shall condemn them, for he repented at the preaching of Jonah ; but when Jesus Christ sends his ambassadors to these men, they will scarcely go to hear them.

And though they know that the Scripture is the law of God, by which they must live, and by which they must be acquitted or condemned in judgment ; and that it is the character of every blessed man to delight in this law, and to “ meditate in it day and night,” yet will they not be at the pains even to read a chapter once a day, nor to acquaint their families with the doctrine of salvation.

And though they are commanded to “ pray without ceasing,” to “ pray always, and not to faint,” to “ continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving,” yet will they not be brought to pray constantly with their families, or in secret. Or if they do any thing this way, it is usually but a running over a few formal words, which they have got on their tongue’s end, as if they came on purpose to make a jest of prayer, and to mock God and their own souls. If they be in distress, or want any thing for their bodies, they want not words to make known their minds. Doubtless, if they felt the misery and necessities of their souls, they would be as forward to beg relief of God, in frequent, fervent, importunate, and constant prayer. Whereas now they invite God to be backward in giving, by their backwardness in asking ; and to be weary of relieving them, by their being weary of begging ; and to be seldom and short

in his favours, as they are seldom and short in their prayers; and to give them but common and outward favours, as they put up but common and outward requests. Do not these men judge themselves unworthy of heaven, who think it not worth their more constant and earnest requests? If it be not worth asking, it is worth nothing. And yet if one should go from house to house, through town and country, and inquire at every house as he went along, whether they do, morning and evening, call their family together, and earnestly and reverently seek the Lord in prayer,—how few would you find that constantly and conscientiously practise this duty! If every door were marked where they do not thus call upon God, that his wrath might be poured out upon that family, our towns would be as places overthrown by the plague,—the people being dead within, and the mark of judgment on the door without. I fear where one house would escape, there would be ten marked out for death. But especially if you could see what men do in their secret chambers, how few would you find in a whole town, that spend one quarter of an hour, morning and night, in earnest supplication to God for their souls!

III. This subject reproves formal professors of religion, who will attend to any outward duty, and take up the easier part of Christianity, but to the inward work, and more difficult part, they will never be persuaded. They will preach, or hear, or read, or talk of heaven, or pray in their families, and take part with the persons and causes that are good, and desire to be esteemed among the godly; but you can never bring them to the more spiritual and difficult duties, as to be frequent and fervent in secret prayer, to be conscientious in the duty of self-examination, to be constant in the excellent duty of meditation, to be heavenly-minded, to watch regularly over their heart, and words, and ways, to deny the bodily senses their delights, to mortify the flesh, and to make no provision to fulfil the lusts thereof, to love and heartily forgive an enemy, to prefer their brethren heartily before

themselves, to think humbly of their own gifts and graces, and to take it well of others that think so too, to love them that have low thoughts of them, as well as those that have high, to bear easily the injuries or undervaluing words of others against them, to lay all that they have at the feet of Christ, and to prefer his service and favour before all earthly objects, to prepare to die, and willingly to leave all, to go to be with Christ, which is far better. The outside hypocrites will never be persuaded to these duties. Of these hypocrites there are two notable sorts. First, The superficial opinionative hypocrite. Secondly, The worldly hypocrite.

1. The superficial opinionative hypocrite entertains the doctrine of the gospel with complacency, but it enters only into the surface of his soul; he never gives the seed any depth of earth. He changes his opinion, and thereupon engages for religion, as the right way, and sides with it as a party; but it never melts and new moulds his heart, nor sets up Christ there in full power and authority; but as his religion lies chiefly in his opinions, so he usually runs from opinion to opinion, and is "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" for, as his religion is but opinion, so is his study, and conference, and chief business, all about opinion. You will never hear, in private conference, any humble and hearty bewailings of his soul's imperfections, or any heart-bleeding acknowledgments of his unkindnesses to Christ, or any pantings and longings after him, from this man; but that he is of such a judgment, or of such a religion, or party, or society, or a member of such a church. Herein he gathers his greatest comforts; but of the inward and spiritual labours of a Christian, he is ignorant.

2. The worldly hypocrite, who chokes the doctrine of the gospel with the thorns of worldly cares and desires, shows a similar temper. His judgment is convinced that he must be religious, or he cannot be saved; and therefore he reads, and hears, and prays,

and forsakes his former company and courses; but because his belief of the gospel doctrine is wavering, he resolves to keep his hold of present things, and yet to be religious, that so he may have heaven, when he can keep the world no longer, thinking it wisdom to have two strings to his bow, lest one should break. His judgment may say, God is the chief good, but his heart and affections never said so; these look upon God as a kind of strange and disproportionate happiness, to be tolerated rather than the flames of hell, but not desired before the felicity of earth. In a word, the world has more of his affections than God, and therefore is his god; his covetousness is idolatry. This he might easily know and feel, if he would judge impartially, and were but faithful to himself. O how faint is he in secret prayer! how superficial in self-examination and meditation! how feeble in heart-watchings, and humbling, mortifying endeavours! how cold and careless in loving and walking with God, rejoicing in him, or desiring after him!

IV. This subject reproves even the godly themselves, for being too indolent in seeking their everlasting rest. Alas! what a disproportion is there between our light and our heat, our professions and our practice! Who makes that haste, as if it were for heaven! How still we stand! How idly we work! How we talk, and jest, and trifle away our time! How deceitfully we do the work of God! How we hear as if we heard not; and pray, as if we prayed not; and confer, and examine, and meditate, and reprove sin, as if we did it not; and use the ordinances, as if we used them not; and enjoy Christ, as if we enjoyed him not! Who that stood by us, and heard us pray in public or private, would think that we were praying for no less than everlasting glory! Should heaven be sought no more earnestly than this? Methinks there is none of us all in good earnest for our souls: we do but trifle with the work of God, and with Christ. We are dying, and yet we consider it not; we are at the door of eternal happiness or misery, and yet we perceive it not. Death knocks, and we hear not: Christ calls, and we

hear not; God cries to us, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts: Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work. Now labour for your lives, now lay out all your strength and time," and yet we stir no more than if we were half asleep. What haste do death and judgment make! How fast do they come on! The spur of God is in our side; we bleed, we groan, and yet we mend not our pace. The rod of God is on our backs; it speaks to the quick, and yet we stir no faster than before. Lord, what a senseless, sottish, earthly thing is a hard heart! Where is the man that is serious in his christianity? Methinks men do every where make but a trifle of their eternal state.

Do the magistrates among us seriously perform their portion of the work? Are they zealous for God? Do they build up his house? Are they tender of his honour? Do they study how to do the utmost they can for God, improve their power, wealth, and honour, for the greatest advantage to the kingdom of Christ, as men that must shortly give an account of their stewardship? Or do they build their own houses, and seek their own advancement, and contest for their own honours, and do no more for Christ than consists with their worldly interest!

And how few are those ministers who are entirely devoted to their work! Nay, how mightily, in this respect, do the very best fail! Do we cry out against men's disobedience to the gospel, in the evidence and power of the Spirit, and by force pull them out of this fire? Do we persuade our people as those should do that know the terrors of the Lord? Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness, as men that indeed believe that without these they shall never see life? Do our bowels yearn over the ignorant, the careless, the obstinate, the unbelieving multitude, when we think they must be eternally damned, if they be not seasonably recovered? When we look our dear people in the faces, do our hearts melt over them; do we, like Paul, tell them, even weeping, of their fleshly and earthly dispositions; and teach them

publicly, and from house to house, night and day with tears? And do we entreat them, as if it were indeed for their lives and salvation, that when we speak of the joys and miseries of another world, they may see us affected accordingly, and perceive that we do indeed mean as we speak? Or rather, do we not study words and neat expressions, that we may approve ourselves able men in the judgment of critical hearers; and speak so formally and heartlessly of eternity, that our people can scarcely think that we believe ourselves? Seldom do we adapt our sermons, either in matter or manner to the great end,—our people's salvation; but we sacrifice our studies to our own credit, or our people's content, or some such base inferior end. How gently do we handle those sins which will handle so cruelly our people's souls! How tenderly do we deal with their careless hearts, not speaking to them as to men that must be awakened or damned! We tell them of heaven and hell in such a sleepy tone, and slight way, that we often preach our people asleep with those truths which one would think would rather endanger the driving of some beside themselves, if they were faithfully delivered.

And are the people any way more serious than magistrates and ministers? How can it be expected! Reader, look but to thyself, and resolve the question. Ask thy conscience, and suffer it to tell the truth. Hast thou set eternal rest before thine eyes, as the great business which thou hast to attend to in this world? Hast thou studied, and cared, and watched, and laboured, lest any should take thy crown? Hast thou made haste lest thou shouldst come too late, and die before the work be done? Hast thou pressed on, through crowds of opposition, "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before?" When you have set your hand to the work of God, have you done it with all your might? Can conscience witness your secret cries, and groans, and tears? Can your families witness that you have taught them the fear



of the Lord, and warned them with all earnestness and unweariedness to remember God and their souls, and to provide for everlasting life? Can your ministers witness that they have heard you cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" and that you have followed them with complaints against your corruptions, and with earnest inquiries after the Lord? Can your neighbours around you witness, that you are always learning of them that are able to instruct you; and that you plainly and honestly reprove the ungodly, and take pains for the saving of their souls? Let all these witnesses judge this day between God and you, whether you are in good earnest about the things which belong to your everlasting peace.

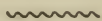


## SECTION II.

### *An Exhortation to Diligence in Seeking the Heavenly Rest.*

I HOPE, reader, thou art, by this time, somewhat sensible what a desperate thing it is to trifle about our eternal rest, and how deeply thou hast been guilty of this sin. And I hope also, that thou darest not now suffer this conviction to die; but art resolved to be another man for the time to come. What sayest thou? Is this thy resolution? If thou wert sick of some desperate disease, and the physician should tell thee, "If you will observe but one thing, I doubt not to cure you," wouldst thou not observe it? Why, if thou wilt observe but this one thing for thy soul, I make no doubt of thy salvation. If thou wilt now but shake off thy sloth, and employ all thy strength, and ply the work of God unweariedly, and be a Christian in good earnest, I know not what can hinder thy happiness. As far as thou art gone from God, if thou wouldst but now return and seek him with all thy heart, no doubt but thou shalt find him. And that thou mayest see I urge thee not without cause, I will here add some considerations to move thee, and to

drive thee from delaying and loitering. To all men I propound them, both godly and ungodly. Whoever thou art, therefore, I entreat thee to rouse up thy spirit, and read them deliberately, and give me a little while thy attention, as to a message from God. "Set thy heart to all the words that I testify to thee this day; for it is not a vain thing, but it is for thy life."



## PART I.

I. Our diligence should correspond to the greatness of the ends which we have in view. Now the ends of a Christian's desires and endeavours are so great, that no human understanding on earth can comprehend them; whether you consider their proper excellency, their exceeding importance, or their absolute necessity.

These ends are, the glorifying of God, the salvation of our own and other men's souls, in our escaping the torments of hell, and enjoying the glory of heaven. And can a man be too much affected with things of such moment? Can he desire them too earnestly, or love them too violently, or labour for them too diligently? When we know that if our prayers prevail not, and our labour succeeds not, we are undone for ever, I think it concerns us to seek and labour to good purpose. When the question is, whether we shall live for ever in heaven or in hell; and when the answer must depend upon our obeying or disobeying the gospel, upon the painfulness or the slothfulness of our present endeavours, I think it is time for us to bestir ourselves.

II. Our diligence should correspond to the greatness of the work which we have to do. Now the works of a Christian here are very many and very great. The soul must be renewed; many and great corruptions must be mortified; custom and worldly interests and temptations must be conquered; flesh must be mastered; self must be denied; conscience must on good grounds be quieted; assurance of pardon and

salvation must be attained. And though it is God that must give us these, and that freely without our own merit, yet will he not give them without our earnest seeking and labour.

Besides, there is much knowledge to be acquired, for the guiding of ourselves, for the defending of the truth, and for the direction of others. Many ordinances are to be used, and duties performed, ordinary and extraordinary. Every year, and day, requires a fresh succession of duty. Every place we come to, every person we have to deal with, every change of our condition, requires the renewing of our labour, and brings duty along with it. Wives, children, servants, neighbours, friends, enemies,—all of them call for duty from us; and all this of great importance too; so that, for the most of it, if we miscarry in it, it will prove our undoing.

Judge, then, whether men, that have so much business upon their hands, should not bestir themselves; and whether it be their wisdom either to delay or to loiter.

III. Our diligence should be quickened, because of the shortness and uncertainty of the time allotted us for the performance of all this work, and the many and great impediments which we meet with. Yet a few days, and we shall be here no more. Time passes on; many hundred diseases are ready to assault us. We that now are preaching, and hearing, and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried to the grave, and laid in the dust, there to become the prey of corruption. We are almost there already. It is but a few days, or months, or years, and what is that when once they are past? We know not whether we shall enjoy another sermon, or Sabbath, or hour. How then should we bestir ourselves for everlasting rest, who know we have so short a space for so great a work!

Besides, every step in the way has its difficulties; the gate is strait, and the way narrow. The righteous themselves are scarcely saved. Stumbling blocks and discouragements will never cease to be cast before

us; and can all these be overcome by slothful endeavours?

IV. Our diligence should correspond to the diligence of our enemies in seeking our destruction. If we sit still while they are plotting and labouring, you may easily conceive how we are likely to speed. How diligent is Satan in all kind of temptations! Therefore, "be sober and vigilant," says Peter, "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." How diligent are all the ministers of Satan in seeking our ruin, and how is our inward corruption the most busy and diligent of all! Whatever we are about, it is still resisting us, perverting our thoughts, deadening our affections to good, and exciting them to evil. And will a feeble resistance then serve our turn? Should not we be more active for our own preservation than our enemies are for our ruin?

V. Our diligence should bear some proportion to the talents we have received, and the means we have enjoyed. To whom you commit much, from them you expect the more. Now the talents we have received are many and great; the means which we have enjoyed are very numerous and very precious. What people on earth have had plainer instructions, or more forcible persuasions, or more frequent admonitions, in season and out of season? What people have had God so near them as we have had; or have had heaven and hell, as it were, opened unto them, as we? Scarcely has there been a day wherein we have not had some spur to hasten us on. What speed, then, should such a people make for heaven! How should they fly that are thus winged! How swiftly should they sail that have wind and tide to help them!

VI. Our diligence should bear some proportion to the great cost bestowed upon us, and to the many mercies which we have received from God. Oh, the cost that God has been at for our sakes! The riches of sea and land, of heaven and earth, has he poured out upon us. All our lives have been filled up with

mercies. We cannot look back upon one hour of it, or one passage in it, but we behold mercy. We feed upon mercy, we are clothed by mercy, mercy within us, common and special, mercy without us, for this life, and for that which is to come. Oh the rare deliverances that we have partaken of, both national and personal! How oft, how seasonably, how fully have our prayers been heard, and our fears removed! What large catalogues of particular mercies can every Christian draw forth and rehearse! To offer to number them, would be as endless a task as to number the stars, or the sands on the sea-shore. Oh! is not a loitering performance of a few heartless duties, an unworthy requital of such admirable kindness? For my own part, when I compare my slow and unprofitable life, with the frequent and wonderful mercies which I have received, it shames me, it silences me, it leaves me inexcusable.

VII. All the relations which we stand in to God, whether special or common, call upon us for our utmost diligence. Should not the creature be wholly at the service of his great Creator? Are we his servants, and shall we not obey his commands? Are we his children, and shall we not yield him our most tender affections, and our dutiful obedience? "If he be our Father, where is his honour? And if he be our Master, where is his fear?" "We call him Lord and Master, and we do well." But if our affections and endeavours be not answerable to our assumed relations, we condemn ourselves in saying we are his children or his servants.

VIII. What haste should they make who have such rods at their backs as are at ours! And how painfully should they work who are driven on by such sharp afflictions! If we either wander out of the way, or loiter in it, how surely shall we smart for it! Every creature is ready to be God's rod to spur us on; our sweetest mercies will become our sorrows; our diseased bodies will make us groan; our perplexed minds will make us restless; our troubled conscience will be as a scorpion in our bosom. Thus we make our own

lives miserable, and constrain God, if he love us, to chastise us. It is true, those that do most for God, do meet with afflictions also; but surely, according to the measure of their diligence and faithfulness, is the bitterness of their cup for the most part abated.

IX. How closely should they ply their work who have such attendants as we have! All the world are our servants, that we may be the servants of God. The sun and moon and stars attend us with their light and influence; the earth, with all its furniture, its many thousand plants, and flowers, and fruits, and birds, and beasts, attends us! The sea, with its inhabitants, the air, the clouds, the rain, the frost and snow, the light and heat, all wait upon us while we do our work. Yea, the angels are ministering spirits for the service of the heirs of salvation. And is it not an intolerable crime for us to trifle, while all these are employed to assist us? Nay more, the patience and goodness of God wait upon us; the Lord Jesus waits in the offers of his blood; the Holy Ghost waits, in striving with our reluctant hearts. Besides, all his servants, the ministers of the gospel, study and preach, and pray and wait upon careless sinners. And shall angels and men, yea the Lord himself, stand by and look on, and offer their aid, whilst thou doest nothing?

X. Should not our affections and endeavours be answerable to the acknowledged principles of our Christian profession? Surely, if we are Christians indeed, and mean as we speak, when we profess the faith of Christ, this will show itself in affections and endeavours, as well as in expressions. Why, the very fundamental doctrines of our religion are,—That God is the chief good, and therefore he should be valued and sought above all things: That he is our only Lord, and therefore he is chiefly to be served: That we must love him with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength: That the principal business men have in the world, is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever. And do men's lives correspond with this profession? Are these doctrines seen in the painfulness of their daily practice? Or rather do not their works deny

what their words confess? Judging by men's actions, one would think they did not believe the gospel to be true. Oh melancholy day, when men's own tongues and professions shall be brought forward to witness against them, and to condemn them!

XI. How forward and painful should we be in this work, in which we are sure we can never do enough! If there were any danger of overdoing, then it might well cause men to moderate their endeavours. But we know, that if we could do all, we are but "unprofitable servants;" much more when we are sure we fail in all. Though all superstition, or worship of our own devising, may be called a righteousness overmuch; yet as long as you regulate your service by the rule of the word, that so it may have the true nature of obedience, you need never fear being righteous overmuch; for else we should reproach the Lord and Lawgiver of the church, as if he commanded us to do too much. Ah! if the world were not mad, they could never think that they who set themselves wholly to seek eternal life are righteous overmuch. The time is near when they will confess, that God could not be loved or served too much, and that no man could be too busy in seeking to save his soul. For the present world you may easily do too much, but for the world that is to come, while you keep by God's way, you can never do too much.

XII. Consider that they who trifle in the way to heaven, will lose all their labour, while serious endeavours would gain their end. Many who, like Agrippa, are but almost Christians, will find in the end they are but almost saved. Oh, how many professors of Christianity will find this true to their sorrow, who have had a mind to the ways of God, and have kept up a dull task of duty, and plodded on in a formal lifeless profession, but who never came up to serious Christianity! How many duties have they lost, for want of doing them thoroughly, and to the purpose! How far has many a man followed Christ, and yet forsaken him when it comes to the selling of all, to bearing the cross, to burning at the stake, or to renouncing all his

worldly interests and hopes for the gospel! What pains has many a man taken for heaven, that never obtained it! How many prayers, sermons, fasts, alms, good desires, confessions, sorrow and tears for sin, have all been lost, and fallen short of the kingdom! Methinks this should affright us out of our sluggishness, and make us strive to outstrip the highest formalist!

XIII. We have lost a great deal of precious time already, and therefore it is reasonable that we now labour so much the harder. If a traveller sleep, or trifle out the most of the day, he must travel so much the faster in the evening, or else he is likely to fall short of his journey's end. With some of us our childhood and youth are gone; with some also their middle age is past, and the time before us is very short and uncertain. How much have we spent in worldly thoughts and pursuits, on trifles or in mere idleness! Though in all likelihood the most of our time is spent, yet how little of our work is done; and is it not high time now to bestir ourselves in the evening of our days? The time which we have lost, can never be recalled. Should we not then redeem it, by improving the little which remains?

XIV. Consider that the greater your present labours, the greater will be your future joys. Though you may seem to lose your labour at present, yet the hour comes when you will find it with advantage. None will ever complain that he came to heaven at too dear a rate, or that his salvation cost him more labour than it was worth; but, on the contrary, it will be our joy to look back on our labours and sufferings, and to consider how the mighty power of God brought us through all. We may say of them, as Paul, "I reckon that the labours and sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." We labour but for a moment, but we shall then rest for ever. All our tears will then be wiped away, and all our sorrows be swallowed up in an ocean of glory and joy.

XV. Consider that laborious striving for salvation,



is the way which the wisdom of God has prescribed as best, and which his sovereign authority has appointed as necessary. Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? When men tell us that we are too strict and precise, whom do they accuse,—God or us? And dare these men think that they are wiser than God? Do they know better than he what we must do to be saved? Mark well the language of God, and see how you can reconcile it with the language of the world: “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Or, as it is in Luke, “Every one presseth into it.” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.” “Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.” “If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully,” that is, powerfully and prevailingly. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Such is the constant language of the Scriptures. And which shall I follow—God or men?

God indeed has resolved that heaven shall not be had on easier terms. He has not only commanded it as a duty, but has indissolubly connected our salvation with the performance of it. Some, indeed, think it is good to be holy, but yet not of such absolute necessity, but that a man may be saved without it; but God has determined on the contrary, “that without holiness no man shall see his face.” Seriousness is the very thing wherein consists our sincerity. If thou art not serious, thou art not a Christian. It is not only a high degree in Christianity, but of the very life and essence of it.

XVI. Consider that this is a course which all men

in the world either do, or will approve of. There is not a man that ever was, or is, or shall be, but shall one day justify the diligence of the saints, and give his verdict in favour of their wisdom. It is true, it is now a way every where spoken against; but let me tell you, many that speak against it, do in their consciences approve of it; and even those that are now against it, will shortly be of another mind. If they get to heaven, their judgment will be changed before they come thither. If they go to hell, their mind will then be altered, whether they will or not.

Lastly, Consider that they who have been the most serious, painful Christians, when they come to die, do exceedingly lament their negligence. Even those that are derided by the world for being so strict, and are thought to be almost beside themselves for their extraordinary diligence, yet, when dying, are ready to exclaim, "Oh, that we had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for our souls!" What a case then will worldly men be in, when their consciences are awakened, when from a death-bed they look behind them upon a negligent life, and before them upon a severe and terrible judgment! For my own part, I may say as Erasmus, "They accuse me of doing too much, but my own conscience accuses me for doing too little, and being too slow." It is, however, far easier bearing the scorn of the world, than the scourges of conscience. The world speaks at a distance without me, so that though I hear their words, I can choose whether or not I will feel them; but my conscience speaks within me, at the very heart, so that every check pierces me to the quick. Conscience, when it reprehends justly, is the messenger of God; but ungodly revilers are but the voice of the devil. As God and conscience are more useful friends than Satan and the world, so are they more dreadful, irresistible enemies.

## PART II.

Thus I have set before you sufficient arguments against slothfulness and negligence; yet, lest all this should not prevail, I will add somewhat more, if it be possible to persuade you to be serious in your endeavours for heaven.

1. Consider God is serious with you; and why should not you be so with him? In his commands, he means as he speaks, and requires your unfeigned obedience. In his promises he is serious, and will fulfil them to the obedient, even to the least tittle. In his threatenings he is serious, and will make them all good against the rebellious. In his judgments he is serious, as he will make his enemies know to their terror, especially when it comes to the great reckoning day. And is it time then for us to trifle with God?

2. Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. He was serious in teaching, when, for this purpose, he neglected his meat and his drink. He was serious in praying, when he "continued all night" in this sacred exercise. He was serious in doing good, "when his friends came to lay hands on him, thinking he was beside himself." He was serious in suffering, when he was tempted, betrayed, spit on, buffeted, crowned with thorns, sweat drops of blood, was crucified, died. There was no trifling in all this; and should not we be serious in seeking our own salvation?

3. The Holy Ghost is serious in soliciting us for our happiness. His motions are frequent and pressing, and importunate. He strives with our hearts; he is "grieved" when we resist him. And should not we be serious in obeying his motions, and yielding to his suit?

4. The ministers of Christ are serious in instructing and exhorting you, and why should not you be

as serious in obeying their instructions? They are serious in study, serious in prayer, serious in persuading you to the obedience of Christ. They beg of God, they beg of you, they hope, they wait, they long more for the conversion and salvation of your souls, than they do for any worldly good: "You are their hope, their joy, their crown of rejoicing." And shall other men be so careful for your salvation, and will you be careless and negligent of your own?

5. The servants of the world and of the devil are serious and diligent in their work. They ply it continually with unweariedness and delight, as if they could never do enough; and shall they do more for the devil than thou wilt do for God, or be more diligent for damnation than thou wilt be for salvation? Hast not thou a better master, and sweeter employment, and greater encouragement, and a higher reward?

6. The time was when thou wast serious thyself in the service of sin, if it be not so yet. Dost thou not remember how eagerly thou didst follow the world and its evil company, and sinful pleasures? And wilt thou not now be more earnest and serious for God? "What fruit had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death: but now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

7. You are to this day serious and in good earnest about the matters of this life. If you are sick, what groans and complaints do you utter! If you are poor, how hard do you labour for your living, that your wife and children may not starve or famish! And is not the business of your Saviour of far greater moment? Are you not poor? and should you not then be labourers? Are you not employed in fighting for your lives? and is it time to sleep? Are you not engaged in a race? and is not the prize a crown of glory? and should you then sit still and take your ease?

*Lastly*, All in heaven and in hell, are serious. The

saints have a substantial happiness, and the damned a real misery ; the one are serious and high in their joys and praises ; the other are serious and deep in their sorrows and complaints. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in heaven, nor any remiss or sleepy lamentations in hell : All there are in good earnest. And should we not then be serious now ?

And now, reader, having laid before thee these undeniable arguments, I do here, in the name of God, demand thy resolution. What sayest thou ? Wilt thou yield obedience or not ? I am confident thy conscience is convinced of thy duty. Darest thou live as thoughtlessly, and sin as boldly, and pray as rarely and as coldly as before ? Darest thou spend the Sabbath as carnally, and slumber over the service of God as inattentively, and think of thine everlasting state as slightly as before ? Or dost thou not rather resolve to “gird up the loins of thy mind,” and to set thyself wholly about the work of thy salvation ; to “lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset thee, and to run with patience the race that is set before thee ?” I hope these are thy resolutions. If thou act agreeably to reason, I am sure they are.



### PART III.

Yet because I know the strange obstinacy and hardness of the heart of man, I once more entreat thee to stir up thy attention, and go along with me in the free and sober use of thy reason, while I propound to thee the following questions.

*Question 1.* If you could grow rich by religion, or get lands and lordships by being diligent in godliness, or if you could get honour or preferment by it in the world, or could be recovered from sickness by it, or could live for ever in prosperity on earth, what kind of lives would you then lead ; and what pains would you take in the service of God ? And is not the rest of the saints a more excellent happiness than all this ?

*Question 2.* If the law of the land punished every

breach of the Sabbath, or every omission of family or secret duties, or every cold and heartless prayer, with death, what manner of persons would you then be, and what lives would you lead? And is not eternal death more terrible than temporal?

*Question 3.* If it were God's ordinary course to punish every sin with some present judgment, so that whenever a man swears, or is drunk, or utters a lie, or backbites his neighbour, he should be struck dead, or blind, or lame on the spot; what manner of persons would you then be, and what kind of lives would you lead? And is not eternal wrath more terrible than any or all of these temporal punishments?

*Question 4.* If you knew that this was the last day you had to live in the world, how would you spend this day? If you were sure, when you go to bed, that you would never rise again, would not your thoughts of another life be more serious that night? If you knew when you were praying, that you would never pray more, would you not be more earnest and importunate in that prayer? Why, you do not know but it *may* be the last; and you are sure your last is near at hand.

*Question 5.* If you should see the general dissolution of the world, and all the pomp and glory of it consumed to ashes; if you saw all on fire around you, sumptuous buildings, cities, kingdoms, earth, heaven, all flaming about you; if you saw all that men laboured for gone, friends gone, the place of your former abode gone; the history of the world ended, the consummation of all things; what an impression may we suppose this would make on your mind! Why, such a sight thou shalt certainly see. Let me, then, put a question to thee in the words of the apostle, "Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat!"

*Question 6.* What if you had seen the process of

the judgment of the great day? If you had seen the judgment set, and the books opened, and the majority of men stand trembling on the left hand of the judge, and Christ himself accusing them of their rebellions and neglects, and at last condemning them to everlasting perdition; if you had seen the godly standing on the right hand, and Christ acknowledging their faithful obedience, and adjudging them to the possession of everlasting joy, what manner of persons would you be after such a sight as this! Why, this sight thou shalt one day see, as sure as thou now livest. and why, then, should not the foreknowledge of such a day awake thee to thy duty?

*Question 7.* What if you had lain in hell but one year, or one day, or one hour, and there felt all those torments of which you now do but hear, and if God should turn you into the world again, and try you with another lifetime, what manner of persons would you be! If you were to live a thousand years, would you not gladly live as strictly as the Bible requires, so you might but escape the torment which you had suffered? How seriously would you pray, and hear, and read, and watch, and obey! How solemnly would you speak of hell, and how earnestly would you admonish the careless to take heed, lest they should come into that place of torment! And will you not take God's word for the truth of all this, except you feel it?

*Question 8.* What if you had enjoyed but one year the glory of heaven, and there joined with the saints and angels in beholding God, and singing his praise, and should afterwards be turned into the world again? What a life would you lead! What pains would you take rather than be deprived of such incomparable glory! Would you think any cost too great, or any diligence too much? Before you would lose that blessed state, you would labour in the service of God, both night and day, and "suffer the loss of all things, and would not count even your lives dear unto you, if you might finish your course with joy." And should not we do as much to obtain it?

Thus I have said enough, if not to stir up the indolent sinner to the serious working out of his salvation, yet at least to silence him, and leave him inexcusable at the judgment of God. If thou canst, after all this, go on in the same neglect of God and thy soul; if thou hast so far conquered and stupified thy conscience, that it will quietly suffer thee to trifle out the rest of thy time in the business of the world, when, in the mean while, thy salvation is in danger, and the Judge is at the door, I have then no more to say to thee.



#### PART IV.

Yet I will add a few more words to the godly, to show them why they above all men should be laborious for heaven; and that there is a great deal of reason, that though all the world besides should sit still and be careless, yet they should lay out all their strength on the work of God. To this end, I desire them to answer the following questions.

*Question 1.* What manner of persons should those be, whom God has chosen to be vessels of mercy, who have received the Spirit for sanctification, consolation, and preservation, and the pardon of sins, and adoption to sonship, and the guard of angels, and the mediation of the Son of God, and the special love of the Father, and the promise and seal of everlasting life—do but tell me in good earnest, what kind of life these men should live?

*Question 2.* What manner of persons should those be, who have felt the smart of their negligence, so much as the godly have done, in the new birth, in their trouble of conscience, in their doubts and fears, in their sharp afflictions both on body and estate? They that have groaned and cried out so often under the sense and effects of their negligence, and are likely enough to feel it again, if they do not reform,—surely one would think they should be slothful no more.

*Question 3.* What manner of persons should they



be in holy diligence, who have been so long convinced of the evil of indolence, and have confessed it on their knees a hundred and a thousand times, both in public and in private, and have told God in prayer how inexcusably they have therein offended? Should they thus confess their sin, and yet commit it, as if they told God what they would do, as well as what they have done?

*Question 4.* What manner of persons should those be in painful godliness, who have bound themselves to God by so many covenants as we have done, and have engaged so oft to be more diligent and faithful in his service? At every sacrament, on many days of humiliation and thanksgiving, in most of our deep distresses and dangerous sicknesses, we are ever ready to bewail our neglects, and to engage, if God will but try us once more, how diligent and laborious we will be, and how we will improve our time, and ply our work. The Lord pardon our perfidious covenant-breaking, and grant that our engagements may not condemn us!

*Question 5.* What manner of men should they be in duty, who have received so much encouragement as we have done by our success; who have tasted such sweetness in diligent obedience; who have found all our strivings and wrestlings with God successful, so that we never importune him in vain; who have had so many admirable deliverances upon urgent seeking; and have received almost all our solid comforts in a way of close and constant duty? How should we above all men ply our work!

*Question 6.* What manner of men should they be, who are yet at such great uncertainties, whether they are justified and sanctified, whether or not they are the children of God, and what shall everlastingly become of their souls, as most of the godly that I meet with are? They that have discovered the excellency of the kingdom, and yet have not discovered their interest in it, but discern a danger of perishing or losing all, and have need of that advice, "Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest,

any of you should seem to come short of it:”—how should such men bestir themselves in time!

*Question 7.* What manner of persons should they be in holiness, who have so much of the great work yet undone as we have? Sins so many and so strong; graces so weak; our acquaintance and communion with Christ so small; our desires to be with him so feeble, all call for strenuous exertion. Our time is short; our enemies mighty; our hindrances many:—And should men in our case stand still?

*Question 8.* What manner of men should they be in holy diligence, whose lives and duties are so intimately connected with the salvation of the souls of others? If we slip, many are ready to stumble: if we stumble, many are ready to fall. If we admonish them daily, and faithfully, and plainly, and exhort them with bowels of pity and love, and pray hard for them, and go before them in a holy and inoffensive conversation, we may be instruments of saving many of our fellow men from everlasting perdition, and bringing them to the possession of the heavenly inheritance. On the contrary, if we neglect them, or cause them to stumble and fall, we may be occasions of their everlasting torment.

*Lastly,* What manner of persons should they be, on whom the glory of the great God so much depends? We bear his image, and therefore men will measure him by his representation. He is no where in the world so strongly represented, as in his saints: and shall they set him forth as a pattern of sin or idleness? All the world is not capable of honouring or dishonouring God so much as we; while the least of his honour is of more worth than all our lives.

Seeing then that all these things which I have mentioned are so, I charge thee who art a Christian, in my Master's name, to consider and resolve the question, “What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” And let thy life answer the question as well as thy tongue.

## CHAPTER III.

PERSUADING ALL MEN TO TRY THEIR TITLE TO THE  
HEAVENLY REST.

I NOW proceed to the third use, and because it is of very great importance, I entreat you to attend to it the more diligently, and to weigh it the more seriously.

Is there a glorious rest so near at hand, and shall none enjoy it but the people of God? What, then, mean the most of the world by living so contentedly without assurance of their interest in this rest, and by neglecting to try their title to it? When the Lord has so fully opened the blessedness of that kingdom, which none but a little flock of obedient believers shall possess, and so fully made known those torments which all the rest of the world must eternally suffer, one would think that they who believe all this to be true, would never have any quiet in themselves till they knew which of these will be their own state, and were fully assured that they were heirs of the kingdom. Most men that I meet with say, they believe the word of God to be true. How then can they sit still in such utter uncertainty, whether they shall ever live in rest or not? Lord, what a strange madness is this, that men, who know not but sickness may summon them, and death call them away, and introduce them into a world of unchangeable joy or pain, should yet live as uncertain of what shall be their doom, as if they had never heard of any such state; yea, and live as quietly and as gaily in this state of uncertainty, as if all were made sure, and nothing ailed them, and there were no danger! If they have but a weighty suit at law, how careful are they to know whether it will go with them, or against them? If they were to be tried for their life before an earthly judicature, how careful would they be to know whether

they would be acquitted or condemned? If they be dangerously sick, they will inquire of the physician, What think you, sir, shall I recover or not? But as to the business of their salvation, they are content to be uncertain. If you ask most men why they hope to be saved, they will answer, Because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners, and the like general reasons, which any man in the world may give as well as they. But put them to prove their special interest in the saving mercy of God, and in the death of Christ, and they can say nothing from their hearts and experience. Men are desirous to know all things, save God and themselves. They will travel over sea and land, to know the situation of countries, and the customs of the world: they will go to schools and universities, and turn over multitudes of books, and read and study from year to year, to know the creatures, and to excel in the sciences: and yet they never read the book of conscience, nor study the state of their own souls, that they may make sure of living for ever. What horrible abuse of God is this, for men to pretend that they trust God with their souls, merely to cloak their own wilful negligence! I know not what thou thinkest of thy own state; but, for my part, did I not know what a carnal heart is, I would wonder how thou didst contrive to forget thy misery, and to keep off continual terrors from thy heart, such especially in cases as the following:

1. I wonder how thou canst either think or speak of the dreadful God without exceeding terror and astonishment, as long as thou art uncertain whether he be thy father or thy enemy, and knowest not but all his attributes may be armed against thee. If his "saints must rejoice before him with trembling;" if they that are sure to receive the everlasting kingdom, must yet serve Him "with reverence and godly fear," because he is "a consuming fire"—how should the remembrance of him be terrible to them that know not but this fire may for ever consume them?

2. How canst thou open a Bible, and read a chapter, without being terrified by it? Methinks every

leaf should be to thee as Belshazzar's writing upon the wall, except only that which draws thee to try and reform. If thou read the promises, thou knowest not whether they shall ever be fulfilled to thee. If thou read the threatenings, for any thing thou knowest, thou dost read thy own sentence.

3. I wonder how thou canst without terror approach God in prayer, or in any duty. When thou callest him thy Father, thou knowest not whether thou speakest truth or falsehood. When thou needest him in thy sickness, or other extremity, thou knowest not whether thou hast a friend to go to, or an enemy. When thou receivest the Sacrament, thou knowest not whether thou takest thy blessing or thy bane. And who would wilfully live such a life as this?

4. What comfort canst thou find in any thing which thou possessest? Methinks friends, and honours, and houses, and lands, should do thee little good, till thou know that thou hast the love of God shed abroad in thy heart, and shalt have rest with him when thou shalt have to leave these behind thee. Offer a prisoner, before he know his sentence, music, or wealth, or preferment, and what cares he for any of these, till he know whether he shall escape with his life? for he knows, if he must die the next day, it will be small comfort to him to die rich or honourable. Methinks it should be so with thee, till thou know what shall be thine eternal state.

5. How dost thou contrive to think of thy dying hour? Thou knowest it may be near at hand, and that there is no avoiding it, nor any medicine that can prevent it. Thou knowest that death is the king of terrors, and the introduction to thine unchangeable state. The godly who have some assurance of their everlasting happiness, have yet much ado to submit to it willingly, and find, that to die comfortably is a very difficult work. How then canst thou think of it without astonishment, who hast no assurance of thy eternal felicity?

6. How dost thou contrive to preserve thy heart from horror, when thou thinkest of the judgment-day,

and the everlasting flames? Dost thou not tremble as Felix, when thou hearest of them? Methinks thy heart, whenever thou meditatest of that day, should meditate terror; and thou shouldst even be “a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends.”

I have shown thee the danger of this state of ignorance; let me next proceed to show thee the remedy.

*First*, That it is possible by self-examination, to come to some degree of certainty about our state.

*Secondly*, I will state to you the hindrances that keep men from self-examination and from assurance.

*Thirdly*, I will lay down some motives to persuade you to self-examination.

*Fourthly*, I will give you some directions for performing self-examination.

*Lastly*, I will lay down some marks out of Scripture, by which you may examine yourselves, and so come to some degree of certainty, whether or not you are among the people of God for whom this rest remains.



## SECTION I.

### *The Possibility of knowing our State by Self-examination.*

*First*, I shall show you that it is possible by self-examination, to come to some degree of certainty about our state.

I. Scripture tells us, we may know, and that many saints before us have known, their justification and future salvation, John xxi. 15-17; Rom. viii. 16, 17, 35-39; 2 Cor. v. 1; Eph. iii. 12; 1 John ii. 3, 5: iii. 14, 24; iv. 13; v. 19. I refer you to the places for the sake of brevity.

II. The Scripture would never make such a wide difference between the righteous and the wicked, the children of God, and the children of the devil, and set forth so largely the happiness of the one and the misery

of the other, if a man could not know which of these two estates he is in.

III. To what purpose should we be so earnestly urged to examine, and prove, and try ourselves, whether we be in the faith, and whether Christ be in us, or we are reprobates, if we cannot attain to some degree of certainty in the matter? 1 Cor. xi. 28, and 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Why should we search for that which cannot be found?

IV. How can we obey those precepts which require us to rejoice always, 1 Thess. v. 16; to call God our Father, Luke xi. 2, to long for Christ's second coming, Rev. xxii. 17-20, and to comfort ourselves with the prospect of it, 1 Thess. iv. 18, which are all the consequences of assurance? Who can do any of these heartily, that is not in some measure sure that he is a child of God?

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SECTION II.

Of the Hindrances of Self-Examination.

Secondly, I shall proceed to show you the hindrances of self-examination.

Here we shall consider,

I. The Impediments to Self-examination.

II. The Causes of Self-deception.

III. The Causes of doubting among Christians.

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## PART I.

### *Impediments to Self-examination.*

I. We cannot doubt but Satan will do his part, to hinder us from examining ourselves. If all the power he has can do it, or all the means and instruments which he can raise up, he will be sure, above all things, to keep you from this duty. He is loath the godly should have that joyful assurance and that advantage

against corruption, which the faithful performance of self-examination would procure them. And as to the ungodly, he knows, that if they should honestly engage in this exercise, they would be likely to find out his deceits, and their own danger, and so escape him. How could he get so many millions to hell willingly, if they knew they were going thither? They would think every day a year till they were out of danger; and whether they were eating, drinking, working, or whatever they were doing, the thoughts of their danger would be ever in their mind, and this voice would be ever sounding in their ears, "Except ye repent and be converted, ye shall surely perish." The devil knows well, that if he cannot keep men from trying their state, and knowing their misery, he will hardly be able to keep them from repentance and salvation.

He therefore labours to keep them from a searching ministry; or to keep the minister from helping them to search; or to take off the edge of the word, that it may not pierce their hearts; or to turn away their thoughts from it; or in some way to prevent its operation, and the sinner's obedience.

II. Wicked men are great hindrances to others examining themselves. Their example hinders much. When a poor sinner sees all his friends and neighbours do as he does, and live quietly in the same state with himself, yea, the rich and learned as well as others, this is a great temptation to him to sleep on in his security. The worldly discourse of these men, also takes away the thoughts of his spiritual state, and makes the understanding drunk with their earthly delights, so that if the Spirit had previously excited in his heart any jealousy of his state, or any purpose to try it, this soon quenches all. Besides, God scarcely ever opens the eyes of a poor sinner, to see the danger of his state, but presently his friends and acquaintance are ready to flatter him, and settle him again in the quiet possession of his former peace. "What!" say they, "do you make a doubt of your salvation, who have lived so well, and have done no body any harm, and have been beloved by all? What do you think has



become of all your forefathers? And what will become of all your friends and neighbours, that live as you do? Will they all be damned? Shall none be saved, think you, but a few strict precisians? If you hearken to them, they will drive you to despair. Are not all men sinners? And did not Christ die to save sinners? Never trouble your head with these thoughts, but believe you shall fare as well as others." Thus do they follow the soul that is escaping from Satan, with endless cries, till they bring him back. Oh! how many thousands have such charms lulled asleep in deceit and security, till death and hell have awakened and informed them better!

Let me entreat you to consider, that it is Christ, and not your fathers or mothers, your neighbours or friends, who shall judge you at last; and if Christ condemn you, they cannot save you; and, therefore, common reason may tell you, that it is not from the words of men, but from the word of God, that you must draw your comfort and hopes of salvation. When Ahab would inquire among the multitude of flattering prophets, it proved his death. They can flatter men into the snare, but they cannot tell how to deliver them out of it. Oh! take the counsel of the Holy Ghost,—“Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience: be not ye therefore partakers with them;” but “save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

III. The greatest hindrances to self-examination are men's own hearts.

1. Some are so ignorant, that they know not what self examination is, nor what a minister means when he persuades them to try themselves; or they know not that there is any necessity for it: but think every man is bound to believe that God is his Father, and that his sins are pardoned, and that it would be a great fault to have any doubt of it; or they do not think that assurance can be attained, or that there is any such great difference between one man and an-

other, but that we are all Christians, and therefore need not trouble ourselves any further.

2. Some are so possessed with self-love and pride, that they will not so much as suspect any danger to themselves. They are like a proud tradesman, who scorns the advice of his friends, to examine into the state of his affairs, lest he should become bankrupt; or as some fond parents who have an over-weening opinion of their own children, and will not believe or hear any evil of them. This foolish self-love hinders many from suspecting and trying their state.

3. Some are so guilty that they dare not try themselves. They are afraid that they will find their state unsound, and therefore they dare not search into it; and yet they dare venture a more dreadful trial.

4. Some are so much in love with sin, and have so much dislike to the ways of God, that they dare not venture on the trial of their state, lest they should be forced from the course which they love, to that which they hate.

5. Most men are so taken up with their worldly affairs, and are so busy in providing for themselves and their families, that they plead a want of time to attend to the concerns of eternity.

6. Most men are so slothful, that they will not be persuaded to be at the pains which are necessary to know their own hearts. It requires some labour and diligence to do the work thoroughly, and they will rather venture all, than take so much trouble.

7. But the most common and dangerous impediment is that false hope commonly called presumption, which bears up the hearts of most men, and keeps them from suspecting their danger.

Thus you see how many difficulties must be overcome, before a man can closely set about examining his own heart.

## PART II.

*Causes of Self-Deception.*

If a man, however, breaks through all these impediments, and sets about the duty, yet does he not always attain a correct knowledge of his own state and character. Of those few who do inquire after marks of grace, and bestow some pains to learn the difference between the sound and the unsound Christian, many are deceived, and miscarry, through the following causes.

I. There is such darkness and confusion in the soul of man, especially of an unregenerate man, that he can scarcely tell what he does, or what is in him; for the heart of the sinner is like an obscure cave or dungeon, where there is but a little crevice of light, that a man must rather grope than see. No wonder if men mistake in searching such a heart, and so miscarry in judging of their state.

II. Most men are strangers to themselves, and are little taken up with observing the temper and motions of their own hearts. All their studies are employed without them, and they are no where less acquainted than in their own breasts.

III. Many engage in the work, forestalling the conclusion. They are resolved what to judge before they try. They use the duty but to strengthen their present opinion of themselves, and not to find out their true condition. Like a bribed judge, who examines each party as if he would judge uprightly, when he is resolved beforehand which way the cause shall go; so do men examine their hearts.

IV. Most men are partial in their own cause. They are ready to think their great sins small, and their small sins to be none at all; their gifts of nature to be the work of grace, and their gifts of common grace to be the special grace of the saints. The first common excellency which they meet with in themselves, so

dazzles their eyes, that they are at once satisfied that all is well, and look no further.

V. Most men search but by halves. If the inquiry is not easily and quickly finished, they are discouraged, and leave it off. Few set to it, and follow it, as be- seems them in a work of such moment. He must "give all diligence" that means to know whether he has made his "calling and election sure."

VI. Men often try themselves by false marks, not knowing wherein the truth of Christian grace consists; some looking beyond, and some short of the Scripture standard.

Lastly, Men frequently miscarry in this work, by setting about it in their own strength. As some expect the Spirit should do it without them, so others attempt it themselves, without seeking or expecting the help of the Spirit. Both these will certainly miscarry in their inquiry.



### PART III.

#### *Causes of Doubting among Christians.*

Because the comfort of a Christian so much consists in his assurance of God's special love, I will here proceed a little further in opening to you some other hindrances, which prevent true Christians from attaining comfortable certainty as to their state and character.

I. One common and great cause of doubting and uncertainty is, the weakness and small measure of our grace. Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to spiritual strength and manhood. They believe so weakly, and love God so little, that they can scarcely discover whether they believe and love at all,—like a man in a swoon, whose pulse and breathing are so weak and obscure, that it can hardly be perceived, whether they move at all, and consequently whether the man be alive or dead.

II. Christians look more at the causes of their pre-

sent comfort or discomfort, than at their future happiness, and the way to attain it. They look after signs which may tell them what they are, more than at precepts which tell them what they should do. They are very desirous to know whether or not they are justified; but they do not think what course they should take to be justified, if they be not; as if their present case must needs be their everlasting case, and as if they be now unpardoned, there were no remedy.

III. Christians often mistake or confound assurance with the joy that sometimes accompanies it. When, therefore, they want the joy of assurance, they are as much cast down as if they wanted assurance itself. Dr. Sibbs says well, that as we cannot have grace, but by the work of the Spirit, so must there be a further act to make us know that we have that grace; and when we know we have grace, yet must there be a further act of the Spirit to give us comfort in that knowledge. Some knowledge or assurance of our regenerate and justified state the Spirit gives more ordinarily; but that sensible joy is more seldom and extraordinary. This these complaining souls understand not; and therefore though they cannot deny their willingness to have Christ, nor many other similar graces, which are signs of their justification and adoption, yet because they do not feel their spirits replenished with comforts, they throw away all, as if they had nothing.

IV. The trouble of poor souls is further increased, because they know not God's ordinary way of conveying assurance. When they hear that it is the free gift of the Spirit, they conceive themselves to be merely passive therein, and that they have nothing to do but to wait until God bestow it; not understanding, that though these comforts are spiritual, yet they are rational, and result from an apprehension of the excellency of God our chief good, and of our interest in him, and from keeping him in our frequent meditations. Now, these mistaken Christians lie waiting till the Spirit shall cast in these comforts into their hearts, while they sit still, and labour not to excite their own

affections ; nay, while they reason against the comforts which they wait for. Now, they must be taught to know, that the matter of their comfort is in the promises, and thence they must draw it as oft as they expect it ; and that if they set themselves daily and diligently to meditate on the truth of the promises, and on the excellency contained in them, and on their own title thereto, they may, in this way, expect the Spirit's assistance for the raising of holy comfort in their souls.

V. Another cause of the trouble of many souls is, their expecting a greater measure of assurance than God usually bestows upon his people. Most think as long as they have any doubting, they have no assurance ; they consider not that there are many degrees of evidence below perfect and infallible evidence. They should know, that, while they are here, they shall know but in part. They shall be imperfect in the knowledge of Scripture, which is their rule in trying ; and imperfect in the knowledge of their own dark deceitful hearts. Some strangeness to God and themselves will still remain ; some darkness will overspread their souls ; some unbelief will be making head against their faith ; and some of their grievings of the Spirit will be grieving to themselves, and make a breach in their peace and joy. Yet, as long as their faith is prevailing, and their assurance subdues their doubtings, though not quite expels them, they may walk in peace and comfort. But as long as they are resolved to lie down in sorrow till their assurance is perfect, their days on earth will be days of sorrow.

VI. Many are long in trouble, in consequence of taking up their comforts in the beginning upon unsound or uncertain grounds. This may be the case of a gracious soul, which has better grounds, and does not see them ; and, when they grow to more ripeness of understanding, and come to find out the insufficiency of their former grounds of comfort, they cast away their comfort wholly, when they should only cast away their rotten props of it, and search for better with which to support it. It follows not that a man

is unregenerate, because he judged himself regenerate upon wrong grounds ; for perhaps he might have better grounds and not know them. Safety and comfort stand not always on the same bottom. Bad grounds do prove the assurance bad which was built upon them, but they do not always prove the state bad. Just as I have seen persons turn from truth to errors or heresies. They took up the truth in the beginning upon false or doubtful grounds ; and then, when their grounds are overthrown or shaken, they think the doctrine is also overthrown ; and so they let go both together ; as if none had solid arguments, because they had not ; or none could manage them better than they did.

VII. Another great and common cause of doubting and discomfort, is, the secret indulgence of some known sin. When a man lives in some unwarrantable practice, and God has often touched him for it, and conscience is galled, and yet he perseveres in it,—it is no wonder if he be destitute of both assurance and comfort. One would think that a soul that lies under the fears of wrath, and is so tender as to tremble and complain, should be as tender of sinning, and scarcely adventure upon the appearance of evil ; and yet sad experience tells us that it is frequently otherwise. I have known too many such, that would complain and yet sin ; and accuse themselves, and yet sin still ; yea, and despair, and yet proceed in sinning : and all arguments and means could not keep them from the wilful committing of that sin again and again, which yet they themselves thought would prove their destruction.

This cherishing of sin hinders assurance in these four ways :—

1. It abates the degree of our graces, and so makes them more indiscernible.

2. It obscures that which it destroys not ; for it bears such sway, that grace is not in action, nor seen to stir, nor scarcely heard to speak for the noise of this corruption.

3. It puts out or dims the eye of the soul, that it

cannot see its own condition ; and it benumbs and stupefies the heart, that it cannot feel its own case.

4. But especially it provokes God to withdraw himself, his comforts and the assistance of his Spirit, without which we may search long enough before we have assurance. God has made a separation between sin and peace. Though they may consist together in some degree, yet so far as sin prevails in the soul, so far will the peace of that soul be defective. As long as thou dost favour or cherish thy pride and self-esteem, thy aspiring projects and love of the world, thy secret lust, or any like unchristian practice, thou expectest assurance and comfort in vain. God will not encourage thee by his precious gifts in a course of sinning. This worm will be gnawing upon thy conscience ; it will be a fretting, devouring canker to thy consolations. Thou mayest steal a spark of false comfort from thy worldly prosperity or delight ; or thou mayest have it from some false opinions, or from the delusions of Satan ; but from God thou wilt have no more comfort, whilst thou makest no conscience of sinning.

VIII. Another very great and common cause of want of assurance and comfort is, that men grow sluggish in the spiritual part of duty, and keep not their graces in constant and lively action. Dr. Sibbs says truly, " It is the lazy Christian commonly that lacks assurance." The way of painful duty is the way of fullest comfort. Christ carries all our comforts in his hand. If we are out of that way where Christ is to be met, we are out of the way where comfort is to be had.

This sluggishness debars us of our comforts in these three ways :—

1. By stopping the fountain, and causing Christ to withhold this blessing from us. So far as the Spirit is grieved, he will suspend his consolations. Assurance and peace are Christ's great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience ; and, therefore, though our obedience do not merit them, yet they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty.



2. "Grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul, but while it is in action;" and therefore want of action must needs cause want of assurance. The fire that lies still in the flint is neither seen nor felt; but when you smite it, and force it into action, it is easily discerned. The greatest action forces the greatest observation; whereas the dead and inactive are not remembered or taken notice of. That you have a habit of faith or love, you can no otherwise know but as a consequence by reasoning; but that you have acts you may know by feeling. As Dr. Sibbs observes, "There is sometimes grief for sin in us when we think there is none;" it wants but stirring up by some quickening word. The like may be said of every other grace. So long as a Christian has his graces in lively action; so long, for the most part, he is assured of them. How can you doubt whether you love God in the act of loving? Or whether you believe, in the very act of believing? If therefore you would be assured, whether this sacred fire be kindled in your hearts, blow it up; get it into a flame, and then you will know. Believe till you feel that you do believe; and love till you feel that you love.

3. This sluggishness in spiritual duties occasions a want of that consolation which the action of the soul upon such excellent objects naturally produces. The very act of loving God brings inexpressible sweetness with it into the soul. The soul that is best furnished with grace, when it is not in action, is like a lute well tuned, which, while it lies still, makes no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is taken up and handled by a skilful musician, the melody is most delightful. "Some degree of comfort," says Dr. Sibbs, "follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun."

*Lastly*, Another ordinary cause of doubtings and discomfort, is the prevalence of melancholy, or of bodily disease. It is no more wonder for a conscientious man that is overcome with melancholy, to doubt

and fear, and despair, than it is for a sick man to groan, or a child to cry when he is beaten. This is the case with most that I have known lie long in doubting and distress of spirit. With some, melancholy, produced by crosses or distempers of body, afterwards brings in trouble of conscience as its companion. With others, trouble of mind is their first trouble, which hanging long about them, at last brings the body also into a diseased state. And then the trouble of mind increases the disease of body, and the disease of body again increases the trouble of mind. This is a most sad and pitiable state: for as the disease of the body is chronic and obstinate, and physic seldom succeeds where it has far prevailed; so, without the physician, the labours of the divine are usually in vain. You may silence such persons, but you cannot comfort them. You may make them confess that they have some grace, and at present abate a little their sadness, yet as soon as they are left to their own reflections, all your convincing arguments are forgotten, and they are as far from comfort as ever. As a man that looks through a black, or blue, or red glass, thinks every thing which he sees to be of the same colour; and if you would persuade him to the contrary, he will not believe you, but wonder that you should offer to persuade him against his eye-sight, so a melancholy man sees all things in a sad and fearful light, because he looks at them through a dark and distempered medium. The chief part of the cure of these men must be on the body, because there is the chief part of the disease; yet how to effect this is often no easy matter.

Thus I have shown you the chief causes, why so many Christians enjoy so little assurance and consolation.

## SECTION III.

*Motives to Self-Examination.*

HAVING thus stated to you the hindrances of self-examination and of assurance, I shall proceed, thirdly, to set before you some motives to self-examination.

Many love to hear of marks of grace by which they may try themselves; but few will be brought to spend an hour in applying them when they have them. They would like to have their doubts resolved; but when they find that the work lies chiefly upon their own hands, and what pains it must cost them to search their hearts faithfully, then they give it up, and go no further.

This is the case not only of the ungodly, who commonly perish through this neglect; but multitudes of the godly themselves, who spend days and years in sad complaints and doubtings, but will not be brought to spend a few hours in serious self-examination. I entreat all such persons to consider the following arguments, which I propound to them in the hope of persuading them to this duty.

I. To be deceived about your title to heaven is exceedingly easy; and not to be deceived is exceedingly difficult.

Multitudes who never suspected any falsehood in their hearts; yea, many that were confident of their integrity and safety, have yet proved unsound in the day of trial. How many poor souls are now in hell, that little thought of coming thither!

Many that excelled in worldly wisdom, have yet been deceived in this great business. They that had wit to deceive their neighbours, were yet deceived by Satan and their own hearts. Yea, those that have lived in the clear light of the gospel, and heard the difference between the righteous and the wicked

clearly explained, and many a mark for trial laid down, even these have been, and daily are, deceived.

Yea, those that have preached against the negligence of others, and pressed them to try themselves, and showed them the danger of being mistaken, have yet proved mistaken themselves.

And is it not then time for us to search our hearts to the very quick?

II. To be deceived about our title to heaven is very common, as well as very easy; so common that it is the case of most in the world. Almost all men among us hope to be saved, and yet Christ says to us, "*Wide* is the gate, and *broad* is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be that go in thereat: but *strait* is the gate, and *narrow* is the way, which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it."

Now, if such multitudes are deceived, should not we search the more diligently, lest we should be deceived as well as they?

III. To be deceived about our title to heaven is very dangerous. The consequences of it are lamentable and desperate.

1. It will exceedingly confirm them in the service of Satan, and fix them in their present way of death. They will never seek to be recovered, as long as they think their present state may serve. As the prophet says, "A deceived heart will turn them aside, that they cannot deliver their own soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

2. It will destroy the efficacy of the means of grace that should do them good; nay, it will convert them into the means of their hardening and ruin. If a man mistake his bodily disease, and think it to be the opposite of what it is, he will be apt to use remedies which will increase it. So when an ungodly man should apply the threatenings and terrors of the Lord, a mistake on this head will make him apply the promises. Now, there is no greater strengthener of sin, and destroyer of the soul, than Scripture misapplied.

3. It will keep a man from compassionating his own soul. Though he be a sad object of pity to every

understanding man that beholds him, yet will he not be able to pity himself, because he knows not his own misery. Oh! is it not a pitiful sight to see a man laughing, when his understanding friends stand by weeping for his misery? Paul speaks of the voluptuous men and of the worldlings of his time even weeping; but we never read of their weeping for themselves. Christ stood weeping over Jerusalem, when they knew not of any evil that was to befall them, nor gave him thanks for his pity or his tears.

4. It refers to matters of the greatest moment, and therefore to mistake here must be most important. Surely, in such a weighty case, where our everlasting salvation or damnation is in question, every mistake is insufferable and inexcusable, which might have been prevented by any cost or pains. Men choose the most able lawyers and physicians, because mistakes of the one may lose them their estates, and mistakes of the other may lose them their lives. But mistakes about the soul are of a higher nature, and are attended by more momentous consequences.

5. If you should continue your mistakes till death, there will be no time afterwards to correct them for your recovery. Mistake now, and you are undone for ever. Men think, that to see a man die quietly or comfortably, is to see him die happily; but if his comfort proceed from a mistake of his condition, it is one of the most painful and pitiable sights in the world. To live mistaken in such a case is lamentable, but to die mistaken is desperate, indeed.

Seeing, then, the case is so dangerous, what wise man would not follow the search of his heart, both night and day, till he be assured of his safety?

IV. Consider how small the labour of this duty is in comparison of the sorrow which will follow its neglect. A few hours' or days' work, if it be closely followed, and with good direction, may do much to resolve the question. There is no such trouble in searching our hearts, nor any such danger, as should deter men from it. What harm can it do to you to try or to know your state and your prospects for eter-

nity? If you cannot find time to make sure of heaven, how can you find time to eat, or drink, or sleep? You can toil from day to day and from year to year, in the hardest labours, and can you not endure to spend a little time in inquiring what shall be your everlasting state? What a deal of sorrow and after complaining might this small labour prevent!

V. Thou canst scarcely do Satan a greater pleasure, or thyself a greater injury, than by neglecting self-examination. It is the main scope of the devil, in all his temptations, to deceive thee, and keep thee ignorant of thy danger; and wilt thou join with him to deceive thyself? If he did not deceive thee, he could not destroy thee: and if thou do this for him, thou dost the greatest part of his work, and art the chief destroyer of thyself. Among all the multitudes that perish, this is the most common cause of their undoing, that they would not be brought to try their state in time.

VI. The time is near when God will search you, and that will be another kind of trial than this. If it be but in this life by the fiery trial of affliction, it will make you often and earnestly wish that you had spared God that work, and yourselves the sorrow. Men think God regards their state and ways no more than they do their own. "They consider not in their hearts," says the Lord, "that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face." O what a happy preparation would it be for that last and great trial, if men would but thoroughly try themselves, and make sure work beforehand! When a man, by faith, thinks of that day, and especially when he shall see "the judgment set, and the books opened," what a joyful preparation will it be, if he can truly say, "I know the sentence will be in my favour! I have examined myself by the same law of Christ which now shall judge me, and I have found that I am acquitted of all my guilt, having 'washed my robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

*Lastly*, Consider the blessed effects of self-examination. If thou be upright and godly, it will lead

thee towards assurance of God's love; and if ever God shall bestow this blessing of assurance on thee, thou wilt account thyself one of the happiest men on earth, and wilt feel that it is not a notional or empty mercy. For,

(1.) What sweet thoughts wilt thou then have of God! All the greatness, holiness, and justice, which are the terror of others, will be a matter of delight and joy to thee. When the thunder roars, and the lightnings flash, and the earth quakes, and the signs of dreadful Omnipotence appear, thou wilt be able to say, All this is the effect of my Father's power.

(2.) How sweet will be every thought of Christ! Then will the name of a Saviour be to thee "as ointment poured forth;" and the thoughts of his gentle and loving nature, and of the gracious design which he has carried on for thy salvation, will delight thy heart.

(3.) What comfort will every passage in the word of God afford thee! How sweet will be the promises, when thou art sure they are thine own! The gospel will then be indeed glad tidings to thy soul. The very threatenings will be to thee a source of comfort, when thou rememberest that thou hast escaped them. Then wilt thou cry with David, "O how I love thy law! More to be desired is it than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb."

(4.) What boldness and comfort wilt thou have in prayer! When thou canst say, OUR FATHER, in full assurance; and knowest that thou art welcome and accepted through Christ, and that thou hast a promise to be heard whenever thou askest, and that God is readier to grant thy requests than thou to make them, with what comfortable boldness mayest thou approach the throne of grace! This assurance in prayer will be a sweet privilege indeed, particularly when the case is weighty, and thy necessity urgent.

(5.) How will it multiply the sweetness of every mercy thou receivest, when thou art sure that all proceeds from love, and is the beginning and earnest of

everlasting mercies ! Thou wilt then have more comfort in a morsel of bread, than the world has in the greatest abundance of all things.

(6.) How comfortably mayest thou undergo all afflictions, when thou knowest that God means thee no hurt in them, but has promised, that "All things shall work together for thy good," when thou art sure that he chastens thee, because he loves thee, and scourges thee, because thou art a son whom he will receive, and that out of very faithfulness he afflicts thee ! What a support will this be to thy heart ; and how will it abate the bitterness of the cup !

(7.) This assurance will sweeten to thee the fore-thoughts of death, and make thy heart glad to think of thy entrance into everlasting joy ; while a man that is uncertain whither he is going, must needs die with horror.

(8.) It will sweeten thy fore-thoughts of judgment, when thou art sure that it will be the day of thy absolution and coronation.

(9.) The very thoughts of the flames of hell will administer consolation to thee, when thou canst certainly conclude thou art saved from them.

(10.) The fore-thoughts of heaven will also be inconceivably delightful, when thou art certain that it is the place of thine everlasting abode.

(11.) It will make thee exceedingly lively and strong in the work of the Lord. With what courage wilt thou run, when thou knowest thou shalt win the prize ; and fight, when thou knowest thou shalt gain the victory. It will make thee always abound in the work of the Lord, when thou knowest that thy labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

(12.) It will make thee more profitable to others. Thou wilt be a more cheerful encourager of thy fellow-men from thine own experience. Thou wilt be able to refresh the weary, and to strengthen the weak, and to speak a word of comfort in season to troubled souls.

(13.) It will put life into all thy affections and graces. It will help thee to repent and melt over thy sins, when thou knowest how dearly God did love thee,



whom thou hast abused. It will inflame thy soul with love to God, when thou once knowest thy near relation to him, and how tenderly he is affected toward thee. It will quicken thy desires after him, when thou art once sure of thy interest in him. It is the most excellent fountain of continual rejoicing, Hab. iii. 17-19. It will confirm thy trust and confidence in God in the greatest straits, Psalm xlvi. It will fill thy heart with thankfulness, and raise thee high in the delightful work of praise. It will be a most excellent help to a heavenly mind. It will exceedingly tend to thy perseverance in grace. He that is sure of the crown will hold on to the end, when others will be tired, and give up through discouragement.

All these blessed effects of assurance would make thy life a kind of heaven on earth. Seeing then that examination of our state is the way to this assurance, and the means without which God does not usually bestow it,—does it not concern us to engage in this searching work?

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Directions for Self-Examination.*

I PROCEED, fourthly, to give you some directions for self-examination.

I. Form not too peremptory conclusions concerning yourselves beforehand. Do not judge too confidently before you try. Many godly dejected souls come to the work prejudging themselves, concluding that their state is miserable before they have tried it; and most wicked men, on the other hand, conclude most confidently that their state is good, or at least tolerable. No wonder if these both miscarry in judging, when they pass the sentence before the trial.

II. Be sure to be so well acquainted with the Scripture, as to know what are sound marks by which to try thyself, and wherein the truth of grace, and essence of the Christian character, consist. And it will be

useful to write out some of the chief, and particularly those Scriptures which hold them forth, when you proceed to examine yourself.

III. Be a constant observer of the temper and motions of thy heart. Almost all the difficulty of the work consists in the true and clear discerning of this. Be watchful in observing the actings both of grace and corruption, and the circumstances of their actings; as how frequent they are, how violent, how strong or weak were the outward incitements, how great or small the impediments, what delight, or loathing, or fear, or reluctance, accompany these acts. By these and similar observations, you may come to a more accurate knowledge of yourselves.

IV. Be sure you engage in the work with a serious, awakened soul, apprehensive of how great importance it is.

V. Resolve to judge thyself impartially, neither better nor worse than thou art, but as the evidence shall prove thee.

VI. Empty thy mind of all other cares and thoughts, that they may not distract or divide thy soul. This work will of itself be enough at once, without connecting others with it.

VII. Then fall down before God, and in hearty prayer desire the assistance of his Spirit, to discover to thee the reality of thy condition, and to enlighten thee in the whole progress of the work.

VIII. Make choice of the most convenient time and place. 1. Let the place be private, that you may be free from distractions. 2. Choose a time when you are at leisure, and have nothing to interrupt you. You cannot cast up accounts, especially of such a nature as these, either in a crowd of company, or of employment. 3. If possible, let it be the present time, especially if thou hast been a stranger hitherto to the work. There should be no delaying in a matter of such weight. 4. Beware, especially, of delaying, when you have a special call to search yourselves; as before the sacrament, in times of public calamities, or of sickness, when God is trying you by some affliction,

and, as Job says, is searching after your sin; then search after it yourselves. Lastly, you should specially choose a time when you are most fit for the work, when you are not secure and stupid, on the one hand, nor yet under deep desertion or melancholy, on the other; for else you will be unfit judges of your own state.

IX. Proceed, then, to put the question to thyself; but be sure to state it right. Let it not be, whether there be any good in thee at all; for so thou wilt err on the one hand: nor yet, whether thou have such or such a measure of grace; for so thou wilt err on the other hand. But, whether such or such a saving grace be in thee at all, in sincerity, or not?

X. If thy heart draw back, and be loath to the work, suffer it not so to give thee the slip; but force it on. Lay thy command upon it; let reason interpose, and use its authority; look over the foregoing arguments, and press them home upon it: yea, lay the command of God upon it, and charge it to obey on pain of his displeasure. Set conscience to work also; let it do its office till thy lazy heart be spurred up to the work; for if thou suffer it to break away once and again, it will grow so headstrong, that thou wilt not be able to master it.

XI. Let not thy heart trifle away the time, when it should be diligently at the work. Put the question to it seriously, Is it thus and thus with me, or no? Force it to give an answer; suffer it not to be silent, nor to think of other matters. If the question be hard, through the darkness of thy heart, yet do not, on this account, give it over, but search the closer, and study the case more exactly: and if it be possible, let not thy heart give over till it has resolved the question, and told thee in what case thou art. Do as David, when he said, "My spirit made diligent search." If thy heart strive to break away before thou art resolved, wrestle with it till thou hast prevailed, and say, "I will not let thee go, till thou hast answered." He that can prevail with his own heart, will also prevail with God.

XII. If thou find the work beyond thy strength, then seek for help from others. Go to some godly, experienced, able, faithful Christian, and tell him thy case, and desire his best advice. Not that any can know thy heart so well as thyself; but if thou deal faithfully, and tell him what thou knowest of thyself, he can tell thee whether it be sound evidence or not, and show thee Scripture how to prove it so; and direct thee in the right use of such evidence; and show thee what to conclude from it. But be sure thou do not make this a pretence to neglect or delay thy own duty of examining thyself; but only use it as one of the last remedies, when thou findest thy own endeavours will not serve. Neither be thou forward to open thy case to every one, or to a carnal, flattering, unskilful person; but to one that has prudence to conceal thy secrets, tenderness to compassionate thee, skill to direct thee, and faithfulness to deal truly and plainly with thee.

XIII. When by these means thou hast discovered the truth of thy state, then pass sentence on thyself according to the nature of thy discovery. A mere examination will do thee little good, if it proceed not to a judgment. Conclude as thou findest, either that thou art a true believer, or that thou art not. But pass not sentence on thyself rashly, or with self-flattery, or from melancholy fears and terrors; but do it deliberately, and truly, as thou findest, according to thy conscience. Do not conclude, as some do, "I am a Christian;" or, as others do, "I am a reprobate, or an hypocrite, and shall be damned;" when thou hast no ground for what thou sayest, but thy own fancy, or hopes, or fears; nay when thou mayest be convinced by Scripture and reason of the contrary, and hast nothing to say against the arguments. Let not thy judgment be any way biassed, or bribed, or forestalled from pronouncing a just sentence.

XIV. Labour to get thy heart deeply affected with its condition, according to the sentence passed on it. Do not think it enough to know, but labour to feel, what God has made thee see. If thou find thyself

graceless, O get this impressed on thy heart Think what a doleful condition it is to be an enemy of God, to be unpardoned and unsanctified, and if thou shouldst so die, to be eternally damned! One would think such a thought should make a heart of stone quake! On the contrary, if thou find thyself renewed and sanctified, O bring this home to thy heart. Bethink thyself, what a blessed state the Lord has brought thee into! To be his child! his friend! to be pardoned, justified, sanctified, and saved! What an inconceivable mercy! Why, what needest thou fear but sinning against him? Come war, or plague, or sickness; or death, thou art sure they can but thrust thee into heaven.

XV. Be sure to record the sentence so passed. Write it down, or at least write it in thy memory: at such a time, upon thorough examination, I found my state to be thus or thus. This record will be very useful to thee hereafter. If thou be ungodly, what a damp will it be to thy presumption and security, to go and read the sentence of thy misery under thy own hand! If thou be godly, what a help it will be against the next temptation to doubting and fear, to go and read under thy hand this record! Mayest thou not think, If at such a time I found the truth of grace, is it not likely to be now the same, and that these doubts come from the enemy of my peace?

XVI. Yet would I not have thee so trust to one discovery, as to try no more; especially if thou hast made any foul defection from Christ, and played the backslider. See then that thou renew the search again.

XVII. Neither would I have this hinder thee in the daily search of thy ways, or of thy increase in grace and fellowship with Christ. It is an ill sign, and a vile sin, for a man, when he thinks he has found himself gracious, and in a happy state, to let down his watch, and grow negligent of his heart and ways, and scarcely look after them any more.

XVIII. Neither would I have thee give over in discouragement, if thou canst not at once, or twice, or

ten times trying, discover thy case; but follow it on till thou hast discovered. If one hour's labour will not serve, take another. If one day, or month, or year be too little, follow it still. There should be no sitting down discouraged in a work of so much importance, and which must be done.

Lastly, above all take heed, if thou find thyself to be yet unregenerate, that thou do not conclude of thy future state by thy present; nor say, "Because I am ungodly, I shall die so; or, because I am a hypocrite, I shall continue so." No, thou hast other work to do. Thou hast to resolve to break off thy hypocrisy and thy wickedness, and to flee to Christ without delay. If thou find thou hast been all this while out of the way, do not sit down in despair, but make so much the more haste to turn into it. If thou hast been an hypocrite, or an ungodly person all thy life, yet Christ still offers himself to be thy Lord and Saviour. Neither canst thou possibly be so willing to accept of him, as he is to accept thee. Though thou hast hitherto abused him, and dissembled with him, yet has he not restrained his Spirit or promises to any set time; or said to thee, "Thou shalt find grace, if thou sin but so much, or so long." If thou be heartily willing at any time, I know not who can hinder thy happiness; yet this is no diminution of the sin or danger of delaying.



## SECTION V.

### *Marks by which to examine Ourselves.*

HAVING thus given you some directions for self-examination, I shall proceed, lastly, to point out some marks by which you may try your title to the heavenly rest.

I. Every soul that has a title to this rest, places his chief happiness in it, and makes it the great and ultimate end of his being. This is the first mark; and it is so plain a truth, that I need not prove it; for this

rest consists in the full and glorious enjoyment of God; and he that makes not God his chief good, and ultimate end, is in heart an idolater, and does not take the Lord for his God.

Let me, then, ask thee, Dost thou truly in judgment and affection, account it thy chief happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory, or dost thou not? Canst thou say with David, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup?" And again, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" If thou be an heir of heavenly rest, it is thus with thee. Though the flesh will be pleading for its own delights, and the world will be creeping into thine affections, and thou canst not be quite freed from the love of it; yet in thy ordinary, settled, prevailing judgment and affections, thou wilt prefer God before all things in the world.

1. Thou makest him the end of thy desires and endeavours. The reason why thou hearest and prayest, why thou desirest to live and breathe on earth is chiefly this, that thou mayest seek the Lord, and make sure of thy everlasting rest. Thou "seekest first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Though thou dost not seek it so earnestly and zealously as thou shouldst, yet is it the chief object of thy desires and endeavours; and nothing else is desired or preferred before it, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

2. Thou wilt think no labour or suffering too great to obtain it; and, though the flesh may sometime shrink or draw back, yet art thou resolved and content to go through all; Matt. vii. 13; Luke xiv. 26, 27.

3. If thou be an heir of everlasting rest, thy valuation of it will be so high, and thy affection to it so great, that thou wouldst not exchange thy title to it, and thy hopes of it, for any worldly good whatsoever. Indeed, when the soul is in doubts of enjoying it, perhaps it may rather desire the continuance of an earthly happiness, than to depart out of the body with fears of going to hell. But if he were sure that heaven

would be his own, he would "desire to depart and to be with Christ," as being "far better."

But if thou be yet unconverted and un sanctified, then is it quite the contrary with thee in all these respects; then dost thou in thy heart prefer thy worldly happiness and thy fleshly delights before God; and though thy tongue may say, that God is the chief good, yet thy heart does not so esteem him. For,

(1.) The world is the chief object of thy desires and endeavours. Thy very heart is set upon it; thy greatest care and labour is to maintain thy estate, or credit, or fleshly delights. But the life to come has little of thy care or labour. Thou didst never perceive so much excellency in the unseen glory of another world, as to draw thy heart after it, or set thee to labour assiduously for it. God has but the world's leavings; he has merely that time and labour which thou canst spare from the world, or those few cold and careless thoughts which follow thy constant, earnest, delightful thoughts of earthly things.

(2.) Therefore it is that thou thinkest the way of God too strict, and wilt not be persuaded to the constant labour of conscientiously walking according to the gospel rule; and when it comes to this, that thou must forsake Christ or thy worldly happiness, thou wilt risk heaven rather than earth.

(3.) If God would but give thee leave to live in health and wealth for ever on earth, thou wouldst think it a better state than this everlasting rest.

II. The *second* mark which I shall give thee to try whether thou be an heir of everlasting rest, is this, As thou takest God for thy chief good, so "thou dost heartily accept of Christ for thy only Saviour and Lord to bring thee to this rest." The former mark is the sum of the first and great command of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," or above all. This latter mark is the sum of the first and great command of the gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And the performance of these two is the whole sum or



essence of godliness and Christianity. Observe, therefore, the several parts of this mark.

1. Dost thou feel that thou art a lost condemned creature, in consequence of sin? And dost thou believe that Jesus Christ has made a sufficient satisfaction to the law? Dost thou heartily consent that he shall be thy Saviour, renounce all trust in thy works and duties, as a ground of thy acceptance, and build thy hopes of salvation on the righteousness of Christ Jesus, and on it alone?

2. Art thou content to take him for thy only Lord and King, to govern and guide thee by his laws and Spirit, and to obey him even when he commands the hardest duties, and those which cross most the desires of the flesh? And though the world and the flesh do sometimes entice and overreach thee, yet is it thy ordinary desire and resolution to obey him, so that thou wouldst not change thy Lord and Master for all the world? Thus it is with every true Christian.

But if thou be a hypocrite, it is far otherwise with thee. Thou mayest call Christ thy Saviour and thy Lord, but thou never foundest thyself so lost without him, as to drive thee to seek him, and trust him, and lay thy salvation on him alone. Or, at least, thou didst never heartily consent that he should govern thee as thy Lord; nor resign up thy soul to be ruled by him; nor take his word for the law of thy thoughts and actions. It is likely thou art content to be saved from hell by Christ when thou diest: but in the meantime he shall command thee no further than will consist with thy worldly estate, or honour, or pleasure. And if he would give thee leave, thou wouldst far rather live after the world and the flesh, than after the word and the Spirit.

But especially I would have you observe, that in all this it is the consent of your hearts or wills, which you are to inquire after; for that is the most essential act of justifying faith. I do not therefore ask, whether thou be assured of salvation; or whether thou believest that thy sins are pardoned, and that thou art beloved of God in Christ. These are no parts of jus-

tifying faith ; but excellent fruits of it, and they that receive, are comforted by them ; but perhaps thou mayest never receive them while thou livest, and yet be a true heir of everlasting rest. Do not say, then, "I cannot believe that my sins are pardoned, or that I am in God's favour, and therefore I am not a true believer." This is a most mistaken conclusion. The question is, whether thou dost heartily accept of Christ, that thou mayest be pardoned, reconciled to God, and so saved ? Dost thou heartily consent that he who bought thee shall be thy Lord, and take his own course to bring thee to heaven ? This is justifying saving faith ; and this is the mark thou must try thyself by.

Thus I have laid down these two marks, which I am sure are such as every Christian has, and none but sincere Christians. O that the Lord would now persuade thee to the close performance of this self-trying task,—that thou mayest not tremble with horror of soul when the Judge of all the world shall try thee ; but have thy evidence and assurance so ready at hand, that the approach of death and judgment may revive thy spirits, and fill thee with joy, and not appal thee, and fill thee with amazement !

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE REASONS OF THE SAINTS' AFFLICTIONS ON EARTH.

*Use Fourth.*—The present doctrine teaches us why the people of God suffer so much affliction in this life. They are not yet come to their resting place. It is still in reserve. We would all fain have continual prosperity, because it is easy and pleasing to the flesh ; but we consider not the unreasonableness of such desires. We are like children, who if they see any thing their appetite desires, cry for it ; and if you tell

them that it is unwholesome, or hurtful for them, they are never the more quieted ; or if you go about to heal any sore they have, they cannot bear you should pain them, though you tell them you cannot otherwise cure them. Their sense is too strong for their reason ; and therefore reason little persuades them. Even so it is with us, when God afflicts us. He gives us reasons why we should bear them ; so that our reason is convinced, and yet we cry and complain as much as ever. It is not reason, but ease that we must have. What cares the flesh for argument, if it still suffer and smart ? But methinks Christians should have another palate than that of the flesh, to try and relish providences by. God has purposely given them the Spirit to subdue and over-rule the flesh. And therefore I shall here give them some reasons of God's dealings in their present sufferings, whereby the equity and mercy thereof may appear.

I. Consider that labour and trouble are the ordinary way to rest, both in the course of nature and of grace. The day for labour goes first, and then the night for rest follows. Why should we desire the course of grace to be perverted, any more than the course of nature, seeing the one is as perfect and regular as the other ? It is the established decree, "That through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom ;" and what are we that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasure ?

II. Consider that afflictions are exceedingly useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our resting place. The most dangerous mistake that our souls are capable of, is to take the creature for God, and earth for heaven. And yet, alas, how common is this ! and in how great a degree are the best guilty of it ! Though we are ashamed to speak so with our tongues, yet how oft do we say in our hearts, "It is good to be here !" Alas, how apt are we, like foolish children, when we are busy at our sports and worldly employments, to forget both our Father and our home ! Hence it is a hard thing for a rich man to enter into heaven, because it is hard for him to value it more

than his wealth. Go to a man that has the world at will, and tell him, "This is not your happiness; you have higher things to look after," and how little will he regard you! But when affliction comes, it speaks convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot. What warm, affectionate, eager thoughts have we of the world, till affliction cool them, and moderate them! How few and cold would be our thoughts of heaven,—how little would we care for coming thither, if God would give us rest on earth!

III. Consider that afflictions are a powerful means to keep us from wandering out of the way to our rest. If God had not set a hedge of thorns on the right hand, and another on the left, we would hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open without these thorns, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! But when we cannot go astray without these thorns pricking us, perhaps we will be content to hold on our way. When we grow fleshly, or wanton, or worldly, or proud, what a powerful means is sickness or other affliction to reduce us! Every Christian as well as Luther, may call affliction one of his best schoolmasters. Many, as well as David, may say by experience, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." When we have prosperity, we grow secure and sinful: then God afflicts us, and, like Israel of old, we cry for mercy, and purpose reformation. But after we have a little rest, we do evil again, till God take up the rod again, that he may bring us back to his law. And thus prosperity and sinning, suffering and repenting, deliverance and sinning again, do run all in a round.

IV. Consider that afflictions are a powerful means to make us quicken our pace in the way to our rest. They are God's rod and spur. What sluggard will not awake and stir when he feels them? It were well if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were rather drawn to heaven than driven; but seeing our hearts are so bad that mercy will not do it, it is better that we be quickened by the sharpest scourge, than

that we loiter out our time till the door is shut. O what a difference is there between our prayers in health and in sickness; between our prosperity and our adversity repentings! He that before had not a tear to shed, or a groan to utter, now can sob, and sigh, and weep bitterly. If we did not sometimes smart by affliction, how dead would be the hearts of the best men! Even innocent Adam is likelier to forget God in a paradise, than Joseph in a prison, or Job upon a dunghill. Solomon fell in the midst of pleasure and prosperity; while wicked Manasseh was recovered in his irons. Dr. Stoughton says, "We are like children's tops, that will go but little longer than they are whipt." Seeing, then, that our own vile natures do thus require it, why should we be unwilling that God should do us good by so sharp a means?

V. Consider that, for the most part, it is only the flesh which is troubled and grieved by affliction. And what reason have we to be so tender of it? In most of our sufferings the soul is free, except so far as we wilfully afflict it ourselves. Suppose thou be pinched by poverty; it is thy flesh only that is pinched. If thou have sicknesses, it is but thy flesh that they assault. If thou die, it is but the flesh that shall rot in the grave. And what if it be broken down? Is it not our enemy, yea, and the greatest that ever we had? And are we so fearful lest it be overthrown? Is it not it that has so long clogged our souls, and tied them to earth, and enticed them to forbidden lusts and pleasures, and stolen away our hearts from God? If we behold our food, it entices us to gluttony; if drink, to drunkenness; if apparel, or any thing of worth, to pride. If we look upon beauty, it entices to lust; if upon money or possessions, to covetousness. Alas! for our carnality and unbelief, which are so contradictory to the principles of Christianity! Surely God deals the worse with this flesh, because we so overvalue and idolize it. We make it the greatest part of our care and labour chiefly to provide for it, and to satisfy its desires; but as he has commanded us to "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the

lusts thereof; so will he follow this rule himself, in his dealings with us; and will not refrain from displeasing the flesh, when it may honour himself or profit our souls. There is, therefore, no likelihood that God's dealings will be more pleasing to the flesh, than that its works will be pleasing to God. Never expect, then, that the flesh should truly expound the meaning of the rod. It will call love, hatred; and say, God is destroying, when he is saving; and murmur, as if he did thee wrong, and used thee hardly, when he is showing thee the greatest mercy.

*Lastly*, God seldom gives his people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest, as in their deep afflictions. He keeps his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers. To give them to such as are well, and need them not, would be but to cast them away. The joys of heaven are of unspeakable sweetness; but a man that overflows with earthly delights, is scarcely capable of perceiving their sweetness. You may more easily comfort the most dejected soul, than him that feels not any need of comfort, as being full of other comforts already. Even the best saints seldom taste of the delights of God, pure, spiritual, unmixed joys, in the time of their prosperity, as they do in their deepest troubles. God is not so lavish of his favours as to bestow them unseasonably. Even to his own, will he give them at a fit time, when he knows they are needful, and will be valued; when he is sure to be thanked for them, and his people rejoiced by them. Especially, when our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then he seldom fails of sweetening the bitter cup. Therefore have the martyrs been possessors of the highest joys, and therefore were they in former times so ambitious of martyrdom. I question if Paul and Silas did ever sing more joyfully, than when they were thrust into the inner prison, and when their backs were sore with scourgings, and their feet were made fast in the stocks. When did Stephen see heaven opened, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus? And though we may never be put to the suffering of martyrdom, yet God

knows that in our natural sufferings we need support and comfort. Many a Christian that has waited for Christ, like Simeon in the temple, in duty and holiness all his days, yet never finds him in his arms till he is dying, though his love was fixed in his heart before; and they that wondered that they tasted not of his comforts, have then, when it was needful, received abundance.

But let us hear a little what it is that the flesh can object.

*Objection 1.* Oh, says one, I could bear any other affliction but this. If God had touched me in any thing else, I could have undergone it patiently; but it is my dearest friend, or child, or wife, or my health that suffers.

*Answer.* It seems God has hit the right vein, where thy most inflamed distempered blood did lie. It is his constant course to pull down men's idols, and to take away that which is dearer to them than himself. There it is that his jealousy is kindled; and there it is that thy soul is most endangered. If God had taken from thee that which thou canst let go for him, and not that which thou canst not; or had afflicted thee where thou canst bear it, and not where thou canst not, thy idol would neither have been discovered, nor removed. This would neither have been a sufficient trial to thee, nor a cure.

*Objection 2.* Oh, says another, if God would but deliver me out of it at last, I could be content to bear it: but I have an incurable sickness; or I am likely to live and die in poverty, or disgrace, or the like distress.

*Answer 1.* Is it nothing that he has promised, it shall "work for thy good;" and that with the affliction he will "make a way to escape" that he will be with thee in it, and deliver thee in the fittest manner and season?

2. Is it not enough that thou art sure to be delivered at death, and that with so full a deliverance? Oh, what cursed unbelief does this discover in our hearts that we would be more thankful to be turned

back again into the stormy tumultuous sea of the world, than to be safely and speedily landed at our rest, and would be more glad of a few years' inferior mercies at a distance, than to enter immediately upon the eternal inheritance with Christ! Do we call God our chief good, and Heaven our principal happiness? And yet is it no mercy or deliverance to be taken hence, and put into that possession?

*Objection 3.* Oh, says another, if my affliction did not disable me for duty, I could bear it; but it makes me useless and utterly unprofitable.

*Answer 1.* For that duty which tends to thy own personal benefit, it does not disable thee, but it is the greatest quickening help thou couldst expect. Thou usest to complain of coldness, and dulness, and worldliness, and security. If affliction will not help thee against all these, by warning, quickening, rousing thy spirit, I know not what will.

2. As for duty to others, and service to the church, it is not thy duty when God disables thee. He may call thee out of the vineyard in this respect, even before he call thee away by death. If he lay thee in the grave, and put others in thy place to do the service, is this any wrong to thee? or does it become thee to repine at it? Must God do all the work by thee? Has he not many others as dear to him, and as fit for the employment? But alas, what deceitfulness is there in our hearts! When we have time, and health, and opportunity to work, then we loiter, and do our Master but very poor service. But when he lays affliction upon us, then we complain that he disables us for his work, and yet perhaps we are still negligent in that part of the work which we can do. So, when we are in health and prosperity, we forget our public duty, and are careless of other men's miseries and wants, and mind almost nothing but ourselves; but when God afflicts us, though he excite us more to duty for ourselves, yet we complain that he disables us for our duty to others. As if all of a sudden we were grown so charitable, that we regard other men's souls far more than our own! But is not the hand



of the flesh in all this dissimulation, secretly pleading its own cause?

*Objection 4.* Oh, says another, it is the godly that afflict, disclaim, censure and slander me, and look upon me with a disdainful eye. If it were ungodly men, I could easily bear it; I look for no better at their hands: but when those that were my delight, are as thorns in my sides, how can I bear it?

*Answer 1.* Whoever is the instrument, the affliction is from God, and the provoking cause from thyself; and were it not fitter, then, that thou look more to God and thyself?

2. Dost thou not know, that the best men are still sinful in part; and that their hearts are naturally deceitful, and desperately wicked, as well as others? And this being but imperfectly cured, so far as they are fleshly, the fruits of the flesh will appear in them, which are, "strife, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, seditions, heresies, envyings." So far, the best of them is as a brier, and the most upright of them sharper than a thorny hedge. Learn, therefore, to look less to men, and more to God. Perhaps thou hast given that love and confidence to saints, which were due only to God, and then no wonder if he chastise thee by them. If we would use our friends as friends, God would make them our helps and comforts; but when once we make them our gods, by excessive love, delight, and trust, then he suffers them to prove adversaries to us, and to be our accusers and tormentors. I confess it is a pity that saints should suffer from saints; and it is quite contrary to their holy nature, and their Master's laws, who has left them his peace, and made love to be the characteristic of his disciples, and to be the first, and great, and new commandment. I know that there is much difference between them and the world in this respect. But yet, as I said before, they are saints only in part, and therefore Paul and Barnabas may so fall out as to part asunder; and upright Asa may imprison the prophet. Call it persecution, or what you please. And know also that thy own nature is as bad as

theirs; and thou art as likely to be thyself a grief to others.

*Objection 5.* Oh, if I had but that consolation, which you say God reserves for our suffering times, I would suffer more contentedly; but I do not enjoy any such thing.

*Answer 1.* The more you suffer for righteousness' sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer you may expect to wait till that sweetness come. When we have by our folly provoked God to chastise us, shall we look that he should immediately fill us with comfort? That were to make affliction to be no affliction.

2. Do you not neglect or overlook the comforts which you desire? God has filled precepts and promises, and other of his providences, with matter of comfort. If you will overlook all these, and make nothing of them, and always pore upon your sufferings, and observe one cross more than a thousand mercies,—who makes you uncomfortable but yourselves?

3. Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? Have they humbled you, and brought you to a faithful confession and reformation of your beloved sins, and made you set close to the performance of your neglected duties, and weaned your hearts from their former idols, and brought you unfeignedly to take God for your portion and your rest? If this be not done, how can you expect comfort? Should God bind up the sore while it yet festers at the bottom? It is not mere suffering that prepares you for comfort; but the fruit of suffering being produced in your hearts.

## CHAPTER V.

## REPROVING OUR EXPECTATIONS OF REST ON EARTH.

*Use Fifth.*—Does this rest *remain* for us? How great then is our sin and folly, to seek and expect it here? Where shall we find the Christian that deserves not this reproof? Surely we may all cry guilty to this accusation. We know not how to enjoy convenient houses, lands, and revenues, but we seek rest in these enjoyments. We seldom, I fear, have such sweet and heart-contenting thoughts of God and glory, as we have of our earthly delights. Nay, we can scarcely enjoy the necessary means which God has appointed for our spiritual good, but we begin to seek rest in them. This, indeed, we disclaim in words, and God has usually the pre-eminence in our tongues and professions; but it is too apparent by the following symptoms, that it is otherwise in our hearts.

1. Do we not desire these more vehemently when we are without them, than we do the Lord himself? Do we not cry out more sensibly, O my friend, my property, my health, than, O my God? Do we not miss the ministry, and other means of grace, more passionately than we miss our God? Do we not bestir ourselves more to obtain and enjoy these, than we do to recover communion with God?

2. Do we not delight more in the possession of these, than we do in the fruition of God himself? Nay, are not those mercies and duties most pleasant to us, wherein we stand at the greatest distance from God? We can read, and study, and confer, and preach, and hear, day after day, without much weariness, because in these we have to do with instruments and creatures; but in secret prayer and conversing with God immediately, where no creature

interposes, how dull, how heartless, how weary are we !

3. If we lose creatures or means, does it not trouble us more than our loss of God? If we lose but a friend, or health, or property, all the town will hear of it; but we can miss our God, and scarcely bemoan our misery. In order to impress your conscience with the evil of this sin, I would earnestly beseech you to reflect on the following considerations:—

I. Consider, it is gross idolatry to make any creature or means our rest. When we would have all that out of God, which is to be had only in God, what is this but to turn away from him to the creature, and in our hearts to deny him? When we extract more of our comfort and delight from the thoughts of prosperity, and of those mercies which here we have at a distance from God, than from the forethoughts of our everlasting blessedness in him; nay, when the thought of that day when we must come to God, is our greatest trouble, and we would do any thing in the world to escape it, while our enjoyment of creatures, though absent from him, is the very thing our souls desire; when we would rather talk of him, than come to enjoy him, and would rather go many miles to hear a powerful sermon of Christ and heaven, than enter heaven and possess it, —O, what vile idolatry is this! When we dispute against infidels, how earnestly do we contend, that God is the chief good, and the fruition of him our chief happiness! What clear arguments do we bring to evince it! But do we believe it ourselves? If ye yourselves had a wife, a husband, or a son, that had rather be any where than in your company, and is never so happy as when furthest from you, would you not take it ill? Why so must our God needs do. For what do we but lay these things in one end of the balance, and God in the other, and foolishly prefer them before him?

II. Consider how you thereby contradict the end of God in giving you these blessings. He gave them to help thee to him, and dost thou take up with them

in his stead? He gave them that they might be comfortable refreshments to thee in thy journey; and wouldst thou now dwell at thy inn, and go no further? Thou dost not only contradict God herein, but thou lovest that benefit which thou mightest receive by them, yea, and makest them thy great hurt and hinderance.

III. Consider whether this is not a probable way to cause God either, first, to deny us those mercies which we desire; or, secondly, to take from us those which we enjoy; or, thirdly, to embitter them, or even curse them to us. God is nowhere so jealous as here. It has long been my observation, that when persons have attempted great works, and have just finished them; or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them; or have lived in much trouble and unsettlement, and have just overcome them, and begin to look with some content upon their condition, and to rest in it, they are usually near to death or ruin. You know the story of the fool in the gospel. When a man once uses this language, "Soul, take thy ease or rest," the next news usually is, "Thou fool, this night, or this month, or this year, shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" O, what house is there, where this fool dwelleth not!

IV. Consider if God should suffer thee to take up thy rest on earth, it would be one of the severest plagues and greatest curses that could possibly befall thee. It were better for thee never to have had a day of ease or content in the world, for then weariness might have made thee seek after the true rest. But if he should suffer thee to sit down and rest here, where will thy rest be when this deceives thee?

V. Consider thou seekest rest where it is not to be found, and so wilt lose all thy labour; and if thou proceed in this course, thy soul's eternal rest too. This will appear from the following considerations.

1. Our rest consists in the full attainment of our ultimate end; but that is not to be expected in this life; therefore, neither is rest to be here expected. Is

God to be enjoyed in the best reformed church, in the purest and most powerful ordinances here, as he is in heaven? I know you will confess he is not. How little of God, not only the multitude of the blind world, but sometimes the saints themselves enjoy, even under the most excellent means, let their own frequent complainings testify, And how poor comforters are the best ordinances and enjoyments, without God, the truly spiritual Christian knows. Should a traveller take up his rest in the way? No, because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, have you that which you sought for? I think you dare not say so. Why, then, do we once dream of resting here?

2. As we have not yet obtained our end, so we are in the midst of labours and dangers; and is there any resting here? What painful work lies upon our hands! Look to our brethren, to the godly, to the ungodly, to the church, to our own souls, to God; and what a deal of work, in respect of each of these, lies before us! And can we rest in the midst of all our labours? We may, indeed, take some refreshing, and ease ourselves in the midst of our troubles. We may rest on earth, as the ark is said to have rested in the midst of Jordan; or as the angels, when they turned in, and rested themselves in Abraham's tent, but yet they would have been loath to take up their dwelling there. Should a soldier rest in the midst of battle, when he is in the thickest of his enemies, and the instruments of death compass him about? I think he cares not how soon the conflict is over; and though he may adventure upon war for the sake of obtaining peace, yet he is not so mad as to take that instead of peace. And are not Christians such soldiers? Have you not fears within, and troubles without? Are we not continually in the thickest dangers? I read, indeed, that Peter on the mount, when he had a glimpse of glory said, "It is good for us to be here;" but surely, when he was on the sea, in the midst of waves, he did not say, "It is good to be here." No, then he had other language, "Save, master, we

perish." And even his desires to rest on the mount, are represented in Scripture as arising from ignorance: "He knew not what he said." Methinks it should be ill resting in the midst of sicknesses and pains, persecutions and distresses: one would think it should be no suitable dwelling for lambs to be among wolves. The wicked have some slender pretence for their sin in this respect. They are among their friends, in the midst of their portion, enjoying all the happiness they are ever likely to enjoy. But it is not so with the godly. I say, therefore, to every one that thinks of rest on earth, as Micah, "Arise ye, depart, this is not your rest, because it is polluted."

3. The nature of earthly things may convince you, that they cannot be a Christian's rest. They are too poor to make us rich; too empty to fill our souls; too base to make us blessed; and of too short continuance to be our eternal felicity. That which is the soul's rest, must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction; but all things below delight us only with fresh variety. The content which any creature affords, abates after a short enjoyment. One recreation pleases not long; we must have a supply of new delights, or they will languish; nay, our pleasure in our society and friendship, especially if carnal, is strongest while fresh. All creatures are to us, as the flowers to the bee; there is but little honey in any single flower, and therefore they must have fresh variety, and take of each a superficial taste, and so to the next. Yea, some have gone through a variety of states, and, after tasting of the pleasures of their own country, travel for fresh variety abroad; and when they come home, they usually betake themselves to some solitary corner, and sit down, and cry with David, "I have seen an end of all perfection;" or with Solomon, "All is vanity, and vexation of spirit." And can this be a place of rest for the soul?

4. If all this convince you not, consult with experience, both other men's and your own. Many thousands and millions have made trial, but did ever one of them find a sufficient rest for his soul on this earth?

Delights they have found, and imperfect temporary content ; but rest and satisfaction they never found. And shall we think to find that which never man could find before us ? If we had conquered to ourselves the whole world, we should perhaps do as Alexander is said to have done, sit down and weep because there are no more worlds to conquer. If I should send you forth as Noah's dove, to go through the earth to look for a resting place, you would return with a confession that you could find none. Go, ask honour, Is there rest here ? Why, you may as well rest on the top of the tempestuous mountains. If you ask riches, Is there rest here ? Even such as in a bed of thorns ; or were it a bed of down, yet you must arise in the morning, and leave it to the next guest that shall succeed you. If you inquire of worldly pleasure and ease, Can you give me any tidings of rest ? Even such as the bird has in the net, or the fish in swallowing the deceitful bait. When the pleasure is sweetest, death is nearest. It is just such content and happiness as the exhilarating vapours of wine give to a man who is drunk. It causes a merry heart ; it makes him forget his wants and miseries, and conceive himself the happiest man in the world, till his sick vomitings have freed him of his disease, or sleep has dissipated the fumes that perverted his understanding, and then he awakes a more unhappy man than he was before. As the fancy may be delighted in a pleasant dream, when all the senses are overcome by sleep ; so may the flesh or sensitive appetite, when the reasonable soul has become captivated by security : but when the morning comes, the delusion vanishes, and where is then the pleasure and happiness ?

Or if you should go to learning, and even to the purest, most plentiful, most powerful ordinances, or compass sea and land to find out the most perfect church, and holiest saints, and inquire whether there your soul may rest,—you may indeed receive from these an olive branch of hope, as they are means to your rest, and have relation to eternity ; but in regard



to any satisfaction in themselves, you would remain as restless as ever. O how well might all these answer many of us, with indignation, as Jacob did Rachel, "Am I instead of God?" Or as the king of Israel said to the messengers of the king of Assyria, when he required him to restore Naaman to health, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sendeth to me to recover a man of his leprosy?"

Doubtless neither court nor country, towns nor cities, shops nor fields, treasuries, libraries, solitude, society, studies, nor pulpits, can afford any such thing as rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or if you could ask the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, in the words of Solomon, "All our days are sorrow, and our labour grief, and our heart taketh not rest." The holiest prophet, the most blessed apostle, would say, as one of the most blessed did, "Our flesh had no rest; without were fightings, within were fears." If neither Christ nor his apostles had rest here, why should we expect it?

Or, if other men's experience move you not, do but take a view of your own. Can you remember the estate that did fully satisfy you? Or if you could, will it prove a lasting estate? We may all say of our rest, as Paul of our hopes, "If it were in this life only, we were of all men most miserable."

If, then, either Scripture, or reason, or the experience of ourselves, and of all the world, will satisfy us, we may see there is no resting place here.



## CHAPTER VI.

### REPROVING OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO DIE.

*Use Sixth.*—Is there a rest remaining for the people of God? Why then are we so loath to die, and to depart hence that we may possess this rest? We

linger, as Lot in Sodom, till God "being merciful to us," plucks us away against our wills. How rare is it to meet with a Christian, that can die with an unfeigned willingness, at least, if worldly calamity constrain him not to be willing! I confess that death of itself is not desirable; but the soul's rest with God, to which death is the common passage, is most desirable. As, however, we are apt to make light of this sin, and to plead our common nature in apology for it, let me here set before you its aggravations; and also propound some further considerations, which may be useful in guarding you against it.



## SECTION I.

### *The Aggravations of this Sin.*

*First*, I shall set before you some of the aggravations of this sin.

I. Consider how much infidelity lurks in this sin. There is either disbelief of the truth of that eternal blessedness, and of the truth of the Scripture which promises it to us; or at least, a doubting of our own interest therein; or most usually a mixture of both these. And though Christians are usually most sensible of the latter, and therefore complain most against it; yet I am apt to suspect the former to be the main sin, and of greatest force in this business. O, if we but truly believed that there is indeed such blessedness prepared for believers, as the Scripture teaches, surely we should be as impatient of living, as we are now fearful of dying, and should think every day a year till our last day should come. Is it possible that we can truly believe, that death will remove us from such misery to such glory, and yet be loath to die? If it were the doubts of our interest in this rest, which alarmed us, yet a true belief of its certainty and excellency, would make us restless till our interest in it was cleared. If a man that is desperately sick to-day, believed he would arise well the next morning, or a man who

was to-day in poverty, had assurance that he would awake to-morrow a prince, would they be afraid to go to bed? Or rather would they not think it the longest day of their lives, till the desired night and morning came? The truth is, though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths, yet there is much infidelity in our hearts, which is the main cause that we are so loath to die.

II. The coldness of our love is discovered by our unwillingness to die. Love desires the nearest conjunction, the fullest fruition, and closest communion. Where these desires are absent, there is only a naked pretence of love. He that ever felt such a thing as love working in his breast, has also felt these desires attending it. If we love our friend, we love his company; when he leaves us, we desire his return; when he comes to us, we welcome his appearance; when he dies, we mourn his loss; and if we really loved God, would not our desires after him be equally ardent? Nay, should they not be much more ardent, since he is above all friends most lovely? Let us take heed of self-deceit in this point; for certainly, whatever we pretend, if we love father or mother, husband or wife, child or friend, wealth or life more than Christ, we are none of his disciples! When it comes to the trial, the question will not be, Who has preached most, or heard most, or talked most, but who has loved most? And do we love him, and yet care not how long we are absent from him? I dare not conclude, that we have no love at all when we are so loath to die; but I will say, were our love more, we would die more willingly. Yea, I dare say, did we love God but as strongly as a worldling loves his wealth, or as an ambitious man his honour, or as a voluptuous man his pleasures, we would not be so exceedingly loath to leave the world, and go to God. O, if this holy flame of love were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, instead of our depressing fears, our mournful complaints, and our earnest prayers against death, we would join in David's lamentation in the wilderness, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul

after thee, O God : My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : When shall I come and appear before God ?”

III. It shows we are not weary of sinning, when we are so unwilling to be freed from it by dying. Did we consider sin as the greatest evil, we would not be willing to have its company so long. Did we look on sin as our worst enemy, and on a sinful life as the most miserable life, surely we would be more ready for a change. But O, how far are our hearts from our doctrinal profession, in this point also ! We preach, and write, and talk against sin, and yet when we are called to leave it, we are loath to depart. We brand it with the most odious names, but when the approach of death puts us to the trial, we choose a continuance with these abominations, before the presence and fruition of God. As Memnon smote his soldier for railing against Alexander, his enemy, saying, “ I hired thee to fight against him, not to rail against him ;” so may God smite us when he hears our tongues reviling that sin which we resist so slothfully, and part with so unwillingly.

IV. It shows we are insensible of the vanity of the creature, when we are so loath to hear or think of a removal. We call the world our enemy, and groan under our sore bondage ; but either we speak not as we think, or else we imagine some singular happiness in the possession of worldly things, for which all this should be endured. Is any man loath to leave his prison, or to remove his dwelling from his cruel enemies, or to escape the hands of murderous robbers ? Do we, indeed, take the world for our prison, and yet are we loath to leave it ? Do we take this flesh as a veil that is drawn between us and God, and yet are we loath to lay it down ? Does the sailor long to see the land, and the traveller to reach his home, and the soldier to win the field, and art thou loath to see thy labours finished, and to receive the heavenly inheritance ? O unworthy soul ! which had rather dwell in this land of darkness, and wander in this barren wil-

derness, than dwell in heaven, the land of light, and peace, and joy.

V. It shows the hypocrisy of our hearts when we are so loath to die. We profess that there awaits us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We call God our chief good, and say, we love him above all things, and yet notwithstanding this, we fly from him. Would you have any man believe you, when you call the Lord your only hope, and talk of the joy that is in his presence, and yet would endure the hardest life rather than die and go into his presence? What self-contradiction is this, to talk so hardly of the world and flesh, to groan and complain of sin and suffering, and yet to fear no day more than that which we expect will bring our final freedom!

VI. Consider how we wrong the Lord and his promises, and disgrace his ways in the eyes of the world, as if we would persuade them to question, whether God be true to his word or not, and whether there be any such glory as the Scripture promises, when they see those who profess to live by faith, so loath to leave their hold of present things. How does it make the weak stagger, and confirm the world in their unbelief and sensuality! O how are we ever able to repair the wrong which we do to God and poor souls by this inconsistency!

Lastly, it shows that we have been careless loiterers, and have spent much time to little purpose, when we are still so loath to die. Have we not had all our lifetime to prepare to die? And are we still so unready, and so unwilling? Would we have wished more frequent warnings? How often has death entered the habitations of our neighbours! How often has it knocked at our own doors! How many distempers have seized our own bodies, so that we have been forced to receive the sentence of death in ourselves; and what were all these but so many messengers sent from God to tell us we must shortly die, as if we had heard a voice speaking to us, "Delay no more, but make you ready." And are we, after all this unprepared and unwilling still?

## SECTION II.

*Reasons why we should be willing to die.*

*Secondly*, Having set before you the heinous aggravations of this sin, I will now proceed to state some further considerations which may make you willing to die.

I. Consider that not to die were never to be happy. To escape death, were to lose our blessedness. If our hope in Christ were in this life only, we were of all men most miserable. Why do we pray, and fast, and mourn, why do we suffer the scorn and contempt of the world, if it be not for our hopes and desires of the life to come? What! Christian, wouldst thou lose thy faith, and lose thy labour in all thy duties, and all thy sufferings, and be contented with the portion of a worldling? If thou say no to this, how canst thou then be loath to die? Good old Milius, when dying, being asked whether he was willing to die, replied, "Let him be loath to die, who is loath to be with Christ."

II. Is God willing by death to glorify us; and are we unwilling to die that we may be glorified? Would God freely give us heaven, and are we unwilling to receive it? Surely to refuse such kindness, would discover great ingratitude and unworthiness. As God resolved against them who made excuses when they should have come to Christ, "Verily none of these that were bidden shall taste of my supper;" so would it be just in him to resolve against us, who frame excuses when we should come to glory.

III. Was the Lord Jesus willing to come from heaven to earth for us, and shall we be unwilling to remove from earth to heaven for ourselves and him? Surely if we had been once possessed of heaven, and God should propose to send us to earth again, as he did his Son for our sakes, we would then be loath to

remove indeed. It was a great change to which Christ freely submitted, clothing himself with the garments of flesh, taking upon him the form of a servant, coming from the bosom of the Father, and bearing his wrath which we should have borne. Shall he come down from the height of glory to the depth of misery, to bring us up to his eternal rest, and shall we after all this be unwilling to die? Has he bought our rest at so dear a rate? Is our inheritance purchased with his blood? And are we, after all this, loath to enter upon its enjoyment?

IV. Do we not combine with our most malicious enemies, while we are loath to die and go to heaven? What is the design of Satan's temptations? Is it not to keep our souls from God? And shall we be well content with this, and join with Satan in his desires?

V. Do not our daily fears of death, make our lives a continual torment? The fear of death, as Erasmus says, is a sorer evil than death itself. These lives which might be full of joys in the daily contemplation of the life to come, and the delightful thoughts of eternal bliss, we fill up with terrors, through these causeless fears and apprehensions. Thus we consume our own comforts, and prey upon our purest pleasures. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk abroad with our hearts full of heavenly joys, we continually fill them with perplexing fears; for he that fears dying, must be always fearing, because he has always cause to expect it. And how can that man's life be comfortable, who lives in continual dread of losing his comforts?

VI. Moreover, all these are self-created sufferings; as if God had not inflicted enough upon us, but we must inflict more upon ourselves! Is not death, of itself, bitter enough to the flesh, but we must multiply its bitterness? Do we complain so much of the burden of our troubles, and yet daily add to the weight? Surely the state of poor mortals is sufficiently calamitous; they need not make it so much worse. The sufferings laid upon us by God, all lead to happy issues; the progress is from suffering to patience, from

patience to experience, and so to hope, and at last to glory. But the sufferings which we make ourselves, have no such good fruits.

VII. Consider further, they are all unprofitable fears. As all our care cannot make one hair white or black, or add one cubit to our stature, so neither can our fears prevent our sufferings, nor delay our death one hour. Willing or unwilling we must depart hence. Many a man's fears have hastened his end, but never averted it. It is true, a cautious fear or care concerning the danger after death, has profited many, and is very useful for averting that danger; but for a member of Christ, and an heir of heaven, to be afraid of entering his own inheritance, this is a sinful, useless fear.

VIII. But though this fear be unprofitable yet to Satan it is very serviceable. Our fears of dying ensnare our souls, and add strength to many temptations. Nay, should we be called to die for Christ, it may draw us to deny the known truth, and forsake the Lord himself. You look upon it now as a small sin, a common frailty of human nature; but if you look to the dangerous consequences of it, methinks it should move you to other thoughts. What made Peter deny his Lord? What makes apostates in suffering times forsake the truth? Fear of imprisonment and poverty may do much, but fear of death will do much more. When you see the gibbet, or hear the sentence, if this fear of dying prevail in you, you will immediately begin to say with Peter, "I know not the man." When you see the faggots and the fire ready, you will say as that apostate to the martyr, "O the fire is hot, and nature is frail," forgetting that the fire of hell is hotter. Besides all this, it gives rise to a multitude of unbelieving contrivances and discontents at the wise disposals of God, and hard thoughts of his providences. When time also should be most precious to us in the close of life, and when it should be employed to the best purpose, we vainly and sinfully waste it in these distracting fears. Thus



you see what a dangerous snare these fears are, and what a fruitful parent of many other evils.

IX. Consider what a competent time the most of us have had to prepare for death. Some have had thirty, some forty, some fifty or sixty years; and why should not a man that would die at all, be as willing at thirty or forty, if God see meet, as at seventy or eighty? Usually, indeed, when the longest day is come, men are as loath to depart as ever. Length of time does not conquer corruption; that never withers nor decays through age. Unless we receive an addition of grace, as well as of time, we naturally grow worse as we grow older. Let us, then, be content with our allotted proportion.

X. Consider, thou hast had a competency of the comforts of life, as well as of time. God might have made thy life a course of uninterrupted misery, till thou hadst been as weary of possessing it, as thou art now afraid of losing it. If he had denied thee the benefits of living, thy life would have been but a slender comfort. Has thy Father allowed thee so large a portion, and caused thy lot to fall so well, and given thee thine abode in pleasant places, and filled up all thy life with mercies, and dost thou now think thy share too small? Is not that which thy life wants in length, made up in the breadth, and weight, and sweetness of thy mercies? What a multitude of consolations, of delightful Sabbaths, of pleasant studies, of precious companions, of wonderful deliverances, of excellent opportunities, of fruitful labours, of joyful tidings, of sweet experiences, of astonishing providences, has thy life partaken of? And yet art thou not satisfied with thy lot? Has thy life been so sweet, that thou art loath to leave it? Is that the thanks thou returnest to him, who sweetened it, to draw thee to his own blessedness? O infatuated soul! would thou wert as covetous after eternity, as thou art of a fading perishing life; and after the blessed presence of God, as thou art of continuance with earth and sin!

XI. Consider, what if God should grant thy desire, and let thee live yet many years, but withal should strip

thee of the comforts of life, and deny thee the mercies which thou hast hitherto enjoyed? Would this be a blessing worth the begging for? Might not God in judgment give thee life, as he gave the murmuring Israelites quails, or as he often gives men riches and honour, when he sees them over earnest for them? Might he not justly say to thee, "Seeing thou hadst rather linger on earth, than come and enjoy my presence; seeing thou art so fond of life, take it, and a curse with it. Let thy table be a snare; let thy friends be thy sorrow; let thy riches be corrupted, and the rust of thy silver eat thy flesh." God might give thee life, till thou art weary of living; be not, therefore, so importunate for life, which may prove a judgment instead of a blessing.

*Lastly.* Consider, how many of the saints of all ages have gone before thee. Thou art not to enter an untrodden path. Excepting Enoch and Elijah, which of the saints have escaped death? Nay, has not Jesus Christ himself gone this way? Has he not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with his own body? And art thou loath to follow him too? O, rather let us say as Thomas, "Let us also go, and die with him;" or rather, Let us "suffer with him, that we may be glorified together."

I have said the more on this subject, because it is so needful to myself and others,—finding that among so many Christians, who could do and suffer much for Christ, there are yet so few that can willingly die, and of many who have somewhat subdued other corruptions, so few have got the conquest of this.

Before, however, concluding, I will answer a few objections.

*Objection* 1. O, if I were but certain of Heaven, I would never shrink from dying.

*Answer* 1. Didst thou not say so long ago? If you are yet uncertain, whose fault is it? You have had no greater matter than this to mind. Had you not better fall immediately to the trial, till you have put the question beyond a doubt? Must God stay while you trifle? must he exercise his patience to cherish

your negligence? If thou hast played the loiterer, do so no longer. Go search thy soul, and follow the search close, till thou come to a clear discovery. Begin to-night; stay not till the morning. Certainty comes not by length of time, but by the blessing of the Spirit upon wise and faithful trial. You may linger out thus twenty years more, and be still as uncertain as you are now.

2. Perfect certainty may not be expected. We shall still be deficient in this, as well as in other doings: I know no reason why we may not expect perfection in all things else, as well as in this. If your belief of that Scripture, "Believe and be saved," be imperfect; or if your knowledge, whether your own deceitful hearts do sincerely believe or not, be imperfect, the result or conclusion must needs be imperfect too. If then you stay till you are perfectly certain, you may stay for ever.

3. Both your assurance, and the comfort thereof, are the gift of the Spirit, who is a free bestower. And God's usual time to be largest in mercy, is when his people are deepest in necessity. A mercy in season, is the sweetest mercy. I could give you abundance of examples of those who have languished for assurance and comfort, some all their sickness, and some most of their lives; and when they have been near to death, they have received it in abundance. Never fear death, then, through the imperfection of thy assurance; for that is the most usual time of all for God most fully and sweetly to bestow it.

*Objection 2.* O but the Church's necessities are great. God has made me useful in my place, so that my death will be a loss to many; otherwise, methinks, I could willingly die.

*Answer.* This may be the case of some; but yet remember the heart is deceitful. God is often pretended, when ourselves are intended. But if this be, indeed, what stops thee, consider, Art thou wiser than God? Does he not know how to provide for his Church? Cannot he do his work without thee? Or find out instruments enough besides thee? Think

not too highly of thyself, because God has made thee useful. Must the Church needs fall when thou art gone? Art thou the foundation on which it is built? Could God take away a Moses, an Aaron, a David, an Elijah, and find supply for all their places? and cannot he also supply thine? This is to derogate too much from God, and to arrogate too much to thyself. Neither art thou so merciful as God; nor canst love the church so well as he: As his interest is infinitely beyond thine, so are his tender care and bounty.

Frederick, the third elector of the Rhine, when he was a dying at Heidelberg, said to his friends, I have lived long enough on earth for you, I must now go live for myself in heaven for ever. So methinks when Christians have lived long in hard labour and sufferings for God and the church, they should be willing to live in heaven for God and themselves.

Yet mistake me not in what I said: I deny not but that it is lawful for a Christian to desire God to delay his death, both for obtaining further opportunity of gaining assurance, and for being further serviceable to the church. I doubt not, but we may pray for recovery from sickness; we may rejoice in it, and give thanks for it, as a great mercy; we may pray hard for our godly and ungodly friends in their sickness; we must value our time highly, and improve it as a mercy which we must be accountable for; every godly man is ordinarily so useful to the church, that even for the church's service he may desire to live longer, as Paul did,—even till he come to the full age of man, and while he is able to serve the church, and it hath need of him. No man should be over-hasty to enter on a state that can never be changed, when both assurance of glory, and his fitness for it, are still imperfect; especially as the saints ordinarily grow fitter for it as they advance in age. But then this must not be from love of earth; we must consider it as our present loss to be kept from heaven, though it may tend to the church's and our own future advantage, and so may be desired.

*Objection 3.* But is not death a punishment of God for sin? Does not Scripture call it the king of terrors, and does not nature abhor it above all other evils?

*Answer.* Though death, considered in itself, may be called an evil, as being the dissolution of the creature, yet being sanctified to us by Christ, and being the occasion of so great a good as our introduction into heaven, it may be welcomed with glad submission, if not with desire. Christ affords us grounds enough to comfort us against this natural evil; and therefore endues us with the principle of grace, to raise us above the reach of nature.

To conclude: You must remember that in what I have said, I refer simply to the godly. I dissuade not the ungodly from the fear of death. It is a wonder rather, that they fear it no more, and spend not their days in continual horror of it. One would think such men should eat their bread with trembling; that the thoughts of their danger should keep them awake in the night; for it is no wonder that a man should quake at the thoughts of death, who expects to be dispossessed by it of his happiness, and knows not whither he is next to go; but for the saints to fear their passage by death to everlasting rest, this is a strange unreasonable fear.

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## CHAPTER VII.

AN EXHORTATION TO THOSE THAT HAVE GOT ASSURANCE OF THE HEAVENLY REST, TO DO ALL THEY CAN TO HELP OTHERS TO IT.

*Use Seventh.*—Has God set before us such a glorious prize as is this everlasting rest of the saints, and has he made man capable of such an inconceivable happiness? Why then do not all the children of the kingdom bestir themselves more to help others to the enjoyment of it? Alas! how little are poor souls

around us, beholden to the most of us! We see the glory of the kingdom, and they do not: We see the misery and torment of the unconverted, and they do not: We see them wandering out of the way, and know if they hold on, they can never come there, and they discern not this themselves: And yet we will not speak to them seriously, and show them their error and danger, and help to bring them into the way that they may live!

But because this is a duty which so many neglect, and yet a duty of such high concernment to the glory of God, and the happiness of men, I will speak of it somewhat the more largely, and show you,

I. Wherein it consists.

II. What are the causes why it is so much neglected:

III. State some considerations to persuade you to the performance of it.

*Lastly*, Apply this more particularly to some persons whom it very nearly concerns.



## SECTION I.

### *The Nature of this Duty.*

THE duty that I would press upon you consists in the things following.

I. Get your hearts affected with the misery of your brethren's souls; be compassionate towards them; yearn after their salvation. If you earnestly long for their conversion, and your hearts are fully set on doing them good, it will excite you to the work, and God will usually bless it.

II. Embrace all opportunities which you possibly can, of conferring with them privately about their state, and instructing and helping them to attain salvation; and, lest you should not know how to manage this work, let me tell you more particularly what you are to do.

If he be an ignorant person with whom you have to deal, who is an utter stranger to the principles of religion, the first thing you have to do is, to acquaint

him with the primary truths of the gospel. Labour to make him understand wherein man's chief happiness consists, and how far he was once possessed of it, and what covenant God then made with him, and how he broke it, and what penalty he incurred, and into what misery he brought himself thereby. Teach him what need men had of a Redeemer, and how Christ in mercy interposed, and bore the penalty, and what is the only way in which salvation can now be attained; and what course Christ takes to draw men to himself, and what are the riches and privileges that believers have in him.

If, when he understands these things, he be not moved by them; or if you find that the defect lies in his will and affections, and in the hardness of his heart, and in his devotion to the flesh and the world, then show him the excellency of the glory which he neglects; and the extremity and eternity of the torments of the damned, and how certainly he must endure them; and how heinous a sin it is to reject the free offer of divine mercy, and to tread under foot the blood of the covenant. Show him the certainty, the nearness, and the terrors of death and judgment, and the vanity of all things below, with which he is now taken up, and how little they will avail him in the time of his extremity. Show him that, both by nature and practice, he himself is an enemy of God, and a child of wrath. Show him the vile and heinous nature of sin, the absolute necessity in which he stands of a Saviour, the fulness of Christ, the sufficiency of his satisfaction, his readiness to receive all that come to him, and the authority and dominion which he has purchased over us. Show him the absolute necessity of regeneration, faith, and holiness; how impossible it is to have salvation by Christ without these; and what is their true nature.

If, when he understands all this, you find his soul enthralled in presumption and false hopes, persuading himself that he is a true believer, pardoned and reconciled, and that he shall be saved by Christ, and all this upon false grounds, then urge him to examine his

state. Show him the necessity of trying, the danger of being deceived, the commonness and easiness of mistaking, through the deceitfulness of our hearts, the extreme madness of putting it to a blind venture, or of resting in negligent or wilful uncertainty. Assist him in trying himself. Produce from Scripture some undeniable evidences of a state of grace; and ask him, whether he ever found such workings or dispositions in his heart. Urge him to a rational answer. Do not leave him till you have convinced him of his misery, and then wisely and seasonably show him the remedy.

If he produce some common gifts, or duties, or works, ascertain to what end he alleges them. If to join with Christ in constituting a righteousness, show him how vain and destructive they are in this respect: if it be by way of evidence to prove his title to salvation, show him how far a common work may reach, and wherein the life of Christianity consists, and how much further he must go, if he will be Christ's disciple. In the mean time, that he may not be discouraged with hearing of so high a measure, show him the way by which he may attain it; be sure to draw him to the use of all the means of grace; urge him to hear and read the word; persuade him to give up his sins, to get out of the way of temptation, and especially to forsake ungodly company; and show him the strong hopes, that in thus waiting on God in the use of means, he may have of a blessing, this being the way in which God is usually to be found.

If you perceive him possessed with any prejudices against the godly, and the way of holiness, show him their falsehood, and with wisdom and meekness answer his objections.

If he be addicted to delay the duties he is convinced of, or if indolence and stupidity endanger his soul, then lay it on the more powerfully, and set home upon his heart the most piercing considerations, and labour to fasten them as thorns in his conscience, that he may find no ease or rest till he change his state.

But because, in all works, the manner of doing



them is of peculiar moment, and the right performance of them greatly furthers the success, I will here add a few directions, which you must be sure to observe in this work of exhortation; for it is not every advice that succeeds, nor any manner of doing it that will serve the turn.

1. Set about the work with right intentions. Let thy aim be the glory of God, and the salvation of your fellow men. Do it not to get a name or esteem to thyself, or to bring men to depend upon thee, or to get thee followers. Be sure that thy main end be to recover them from eternal misery, and to bring them to eternal rest.

2. Do it speedily. As you would not have them delay their return, so do not you delay to seek their return. You have been long purposing to speak to such an ignorant neighbour, or to deal with such a scandalous sinner, and yet you have never done it. Alas! while you delay, he runs on the score all the while; he gets deeper and deeper in debt: wrath is heaping up; sin is taking root; conscience grows seared, and the heart hardened; the devil rules and rejoices; Christ is shut out; the Spirit is repulsed; God is dishonoured; the law is violated; time runs on; the day of visitation hastes away; death and judgment are even at the door; and what if the man die, and fall short of heaven, while you are purposing to teach him and help him thither? What if he drop into hell, while you are purposing to prevent it? Delay in duty is a great degree of disobedience, even though you should afterwards perform it. It shows a heart that is indisposed to the work. O how many poor sinners grow rooted, and next to incurable in sin, and at last perish, while we are purposing to seek their recovery! Opportunities last not always. When thou hearest that the sinner is grown obstinate, or is dead, will not conscience say to thee, How knowest thou but thou mightest have prevented the damnation of a soul? Lay aside thy excuses then, and obey God's command, "Exhort one another daily, while it

is called to-day ; lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

3. Do it from compassion and love. We have many reprovers ; but their manner shows too plainly, that they are not influenced by love. Pride bids men reprove others, and they do it proudly, censoriously, and contemptuously : passion bids them reprove others, and they do it passionately. Now, it is not vilifying or reproaching a man for his faults, that is likely to work his reformation, or to convert him to God. Men will take those for their enemies that thus deal with them ; and the words of an enemy are little persuasive. Lay aside your pride and passion, therefore, and go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, that they may see you indeed believe them to be miserable, and that you unfeignedly pity their case. Let them see that your very bowels yearn over them, and that it is the earnest desire of your heart to do them good. Let them perceive that you have no other end in view, but their everlasting happiness ; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love to their souls, that force you to speak. If men would go to every ignorant unconverted neighbour they have, and thus deal with them, O what blessed fruit should we quickly see ! You little know what a prevailing course this would prove. How few, even of the vilest drunkards or swearers, would be so obstinate, as wholly to reject or despise the exhortations of love ! I know it must be God that must change men’s hearts ; but I know also, that God works by means, and when he means to prevail with men, he usually suits the means to the end, and stirs up men to plead with them in a kindly way, and so makes it successful.

4. Do it with all possible plainness and faithfulness. Do not trifle with men. Do not hide from them their misery or danger. Do not make their sins less than they are, nor speak of them in extenuating language. Do not encourage them in a false hope or faith, no more than you would discourage the sound hopes of the righteous. If you see their case to be dangerous, tell them so plainly. “ Verily, verily I say unto you,”

says Christ, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Without holiness," says Paul, "no man shall see the Lord." Thus must you deal faithfully with men, if you intend to do them good. It is not hovering at a distance, in a general discourse, that will serve the turn. It is not in curing men's souls, as in curing their bodies, where they must not know their danger, lest it distress them, and hinder their cure. They are here agents in their own cure, and if they know not their misery, they will never bewail it, nor see how much they need a Saviour. If they know not the worst, they will not labour to prevent it; but will sit still and loiter till they drop into perdition. Deal plainly, therefore, with them, or you do but deceive and destroy them.

5. Do it earnestly, seriously, and zealously. The exceeding stupidity and deadness of men's hearts is such, that no other dealing will ordinarily work. If you speak to some persons of the evil of their sin, of their need of Christ, of the danger of their souls, and of the necessity of regeneration, they will wearily and unwillingly give you the hearing, and put off all with a sigh, or a few good wishes, saying, "God forgive us, we are all sinners," and there is an end. If ever you will do them good, therefore, you must sharpen your exhortation, and set it home to their hearts, till you have roused them up, and made them begin to look about them. Let them know that you speak to them not about trifles, or about matters of uncertainty, which perhaps may never come to pass, but about the saving and damning of their souls, whether they shall be blessed with Christ, or tormented with devils, and that for ever. O labour to make men know that it is madness, to trifle about salvation or damnation; that heaven and hell are not matters to be passed over with a few careless thoughts! Matters of moment must be dealt with seriously. To tell a man of his sins as softly as Eli did his sons; to reprove him as gently as Jehosaphat did Ahab, "Let not the king say so," does usually as much harm as good. I am persuaded the very manner of

some men's reproof and exhortation has hardened many a sinner in the way of destruction. To tell them of sin, or of heaven or hell, in dull, easy, careless language, makes men think you are not in good earnest, nor mean as you speak; but either that you scarcely believe such things to be true, or else that you consider them as very slight and indifferent matters. O brethren, speak of sin as sin, and of heaven as heaven, and of hell as hell, and not as if you were in jest, or they were but trifles.

6. Yet lest you run into extremes, I advise you to do it with prudence and discretion. Be as serious as you can, but yet with wisdom; and especially you must be wise in the things following.

(1.) Choose the fittest season for your exhortation. Speak not to men when they are in passion, or in drink, or in public, where they will take it for a disgrace. You should observe, when they are fittest to receive instruction. It is an excellent example that Paul set us, in relation to his Jewish brethren: "I communicated," says he, "the Gospel to them, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest I had run or should run in vain." Some men would take this to be a sinful compliance, but Paul knew how great a hindrance men's reputation is to their receiving the truth, and that the remedy must not only be fitted to the disease, but also to the strength of the patient. Moreover, means will work easily, if you take the opportunity. When the earth is soft, the plough will enter. Take a man when he is under affliction, or in the house of mourning, or awakened by some moving sermon, and then set it home, and you may do him good. Christian faithfulness requires us, not only to do good when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities of doing good.

(2.) Suit your exhortation to the quality and temper of the persons addressed. If he be a learned or ingenious man, you must deal with him more by convincing arguments, and less by passionate persuasions. If he be one that is both ignorant and stupid, there is need of both. If he be one that is convinced, but yet not

converted, you must employ chiefly those means which rouse the affections. If he be obstinate and secure, you must reprove him sharply. If he be of a timorous, tender nature, and liable to dejections or distractions, you must deal mildly with him. Love, and plainness, and seriousness, take with all; but words of terror, some can scarcely bear.

(3.) Be wise also in using the apt expressions. Many a minister delivers most excellent and useful matter in such harsh language, that it makes the hearers loathe the food they should live by, and laugh at a sermon that might make them quake. And so it is in private exhortation as well as public. If you clothe the most amiable truth in sordid language, you will make men disdain it as monstrous and deformed, though it be the offspring of God, and of a high and heavenly nature.

7. Let all your exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let the sinner be convinced that you speak not from yourselves, or out of your own head. Show them the very words of Scripture for what you say. Turn them to the chapter and verse where the sin is condemned, and where the duty is commanded. Press them with the truth and authority of God. Ask them, whether they believe that this is his word, and whether his word be true. So much of God as appears in our words, so much will they carry power with them. The voice of man is contemptible; but the voice of God is awful and terrible. They can and may reject your words; but they cannot, they dare not, reject the words of the Almighty. Be sure, therefore, to make them know, that you speak nothing but what God has spoken before you.

8. Be frequent with them in this duty of exhortation. It is not speaking once or twice that usually will prevail with men. If God himself must be constantly solicited, as if importunity could prevail with him when nothing else can; and therefore requires us to pray always and not to faint, the same course will no doubt be most prevailing with men. We are therefore commanded to "exhort one another daily,"

and "with all long suffering." The fire is not always brought out of the flint at one stroke ; nor men's affections kindled at the first exhortation. And if they were, yet if they be not followed with fresh exhortations, they will soon grow cold again. Weary out sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties. Follow them, and give them no rest in their sin. This is true charity ; this is the way to save men's souls.

9. Strive to bring all your exhortations to an issue. Content not yourself with simply doing the work, but look after the success. I have long observed, that, although ministers or private Christians speak convincing and powerful words, yet if their hearts do not long after the success of them with the hearers, but all their care is over when they have ended their speech, pretending that, having done their duty, they leave the issue to God, they seldom prosper in their labours. Labour, therefore, to drive all your exhortations to the desired issue. If you are reproving a sin, cease not till you have, if possible, got the sinner to promise to forsake it, and to avoid the occasions of it. If you are exhorting one to a duty, urge him to promise you to set immediately about it. If you would draw them to Christ, leave them not till you have made them confess, that their present unregenerate state is miserable, and not to be rested in ; and till they have acknowledged the necessity of Christ, and of a change of heart ; and till they have promised to apply diligently, and without delay, to the use of the means of grace. O that all Christians would be persuaded to take this course with all their neighbours and friends that are yet enslaved by sin, and strangers to Christ !

Lastly, be sure that your example exhort as well as your words. Let them see you constant in all the duties to which you persuade them. Let them see in your lives that difference from sinners, and that excellency above the world, which you exhort them to. Let them see by your constant labours for heaven, that you do indeed believe that which you would have them to believe. If you tell others of the

admirable joys of heaven, while ye yourselves do nothing but drudge for the world, and are as much taken up in striving to be rich, or as quarrelsome with your neighbours in a case of trade, as any others, who will believe you? Or who will be persuaded by you to seek the everlasting riches? Let not men see you proud, while you exhort them to be humble; nor to have a seared conscience in one thing, while you would have theirs tender in another. A holy, heavenly life, is a constant and powerful reproof to the conscience of a worldling, and a constant and eloquent solicitation of him to change his course.

Thus I have explained to you that part of this duty, which consists in private familiar exhortation, for helping poor souls to everlasting rest; and I have showed you also the manner how to perform it that you may succeed.

III. Use your utmost endeavours to help men to profit by the public ordinances of religion. And to this end you must do the things following.

1. Use your endeavours for procuring faithful ministers in places where they are wanting. This is God's ordinary means of converting and saving men. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Not only for your own sakes, therefore, but for the sake of the poor miserable people about you, do all you can to bring this to pass. "If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Improve, therefore, all your interest and diligence to this end. If means be wanting to maintain a minister, open your purses to the utmost, rather than that the means of men's salvation should be wanting. Who knows how many souls may bless you, who may be converted and saved by the ministry which you may procure? This is a higher and nobler charity, than if you gave all you have to relieve their bodies. Both, indeed, must be regarded, yet the soul has the first and strongest claim on our regards.

2. When you enjoy the blessing of the gospel, you must use your utmost diligence to help poor souls to receive the fruit of it. To this end, you must draw

them to attend constantly upon it. Remind them often of what they have heard. Often meet together (besides the more public meeting in the congregation), in order to repeat together the word which you have heard in public,—to pour out your united prayers for the Church and yourselves, to join in singing the praises of God, to quicken each other in love, and heavenliness, and holy walking; and all this not as a separate church, but as a part of the church more diligent than the rest, in redeeming time, and helping the souls of each other heavenward. But let all your private meetings be in subordination to the public, and with the approbation and consent of your spiritual guides, “remembering them which have the rule over you, which speak to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”

3. If you would have souls converted and saved by the ordinances, labour to keep the ordinances and ministry in esteem. No man will be much wrought on by that which he despises. The great causes of this contempt, are a perverted judgment and a graceless heart. It is no more wonder for a soul to loathe the ordinances, that relishes not their spiritual nature, nor sees God in them, than it is for a sick man to loathe his food. O what a rare blessing is a clear, sound, sanctified judgment! “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as ye also do: and we beseech you brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their works’ sake; and be at peace among yourselves.” “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as those that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.”

And now, Christian reader, seeing it is a duty that God has laid on every man according to his ability, thus to exhort and reprove, and with all possible dili-



gence to labour after the salvation of all about him, judge whether this work is generally and conscientiously performed by us. Alas! where shall we find the man among us, that engages in this duty with all his might, that sets his heart upon the souls of his brethren, that they may be saved?

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SECTION II.

Hinderances to this Duty.

Secondly, Let us enquire what are the causes of the general neglect of this duty, that the hinderances being discovered, they may the more easily be overcome.

I. Men's own gracelessness and guiltiness. They have not felt the wickedness of their own natures, nor their lost condition, nor their need of Christ, nor the transforming work of the Spirit; how then can they discover these to others? They have not been themselves exalted with the heavenly delights; how then should they draw others so earnestly to seek them? Men are also guilty themselves of the sins they should reprove; and this stops their mouth, and makes them ashamed to reprove others, as well indeed it may.

II. The secret infidelity of men's hearts. Of this, even the best have so great a measure, that it causes this duty to be done by halves. Alas! brethren, we surely do not believe men's misery; we surely do not believe the truth of God's threatenings. Did we verily believe that all the unregenerate and unholy shall be eternally tormented in hell, how could we hold our tongues? How could we refrain from tears when we look them in the face, as did the prophet when he looked upon Hazael, especially when they are our kindred or friends, that are near and dear to us? Thus secret unbelief of the truth of Scripture, consumes the vigour of each grace and duty.

III. Want of charity and compassion to men's souls.

We are cruel and hard-hearted toward the miserable, and therefore, as the priest and the Levite did by the wounded man, we look on them and pass by. Oh! what tender heart could endure to look upon a poor, blind, forlorn sinner, wounded by sin, and captivated by Satan, and never once open our mouths for his recovery? What though he be silent, and do not himself desire thy help? His very misery cries aloud, and misery is the most effectual suitor to one that is compassionate. Had not God heard the cry of our miseries before he heard the cry of our prayers, and been moved by his own pity, before he was moved by our importunity, we might have remained for ever the slaves of Satan. Alas! what pitiful sights do we daily see? The ignorant, the profane, the neglecters of Christ and their souls; and yet we scarcely pity them. You will pray to God for them, in customary duties, that he would open the eyes, and turn the hearts of your unconverted friends and neighbours. But why do you not endeavour their conversion if you desire it? And if you do not desire it, why do you ask it? Does not your negligence convict you of hypocrisy in your prayers, and of mocking the most high God with your deceitful words? If you should see your neighbour fallen into a pit, and should immediately fall down on your knees, and pray God to help him out, but would neither put forth your hand to help, nor once persuade or direct him to help himself, would you not deserve to be set down as cruel and hypocritical? What the Holy Ghost says of men's bodily miseries, I may much more say of the misery of their souls: "If any man seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

IV. A base man-pleasing disposition. It is an ungrateful work, and for the most part makes those our enemies that were our friends; and men cannot bear the reproaches and unthankful returns of sinners. It may be they are their chief friends on whom is all their dependence, so that it may be their undoing to

displease them. We are so loath indeed to displease men, and so desirous to keep in favour with them, that it makes us neglect our known duty. How can these men be Christians that love the favour of men "more than the praise of God," for if they yet seek "to please men," they are no longer the servants of Christ? To win them, indeed, we must become all things to all men; but to please them to their destruction, and let them perish, that we may maintain our credit with them, is a course so base and barbarously cruel, that he who has the profession of a Christian should abhor it.

V. Sinful bashfulness. When we should labour to make men ashamed of their sins, we are ourselves ashamed of our duties. May not these sinners condemn us, when they will not blush to swear, or be drunk, or neglect the worship of God, and yet we will blush to tell them of their sin, and persuade them from it? Sinners will boast of their sins, and impudently show them in the open streets; and shall not we be as bold in drawing them from their evil courses? Not that I approve of impudence in any; nor would I have inferiors forget their distance in admonishing their superiors; but let them do it with all humility, and submission, and respect. But yet I would much less have them forget their duty to God and to their superiors. Bashfulness is unseemly in cases of absolute necessity. Indeed, it is not a work to be ashamed of. To obey God in persuading men from their sins to Christ, and helping to save their souls, is not a business at which a man should blush. And yet, alas! what abundance of souls have been neglected through the prevalence of this sin! Most of us are, in this respect, heinously guilty.

VI. Indolence and impatience. This is a work that seldom succeeds at the first, except it be followed with wisdom and unweariedness. You must be a great while teaching an ignorant person, before he will be brought to know the very fundamentals of religion, and a great while persuading an obstinate sinner, before he will come to a full resolution to re-

turn. Now this is a tedious course to the flesh and few will bear it, not considering what patience God exercised towards us when we were in our sins, and how long he followed us with the importunities of his Spirit. Woe to us if God had been as impatient with us, as we are with our fellow-men!

VII. Self-seeking and self-minding, are, with many, a great hindrance. Men are all for themselves. "All mind their own things;" few "the things of Christ," and their brethren. Hence they are prone to say, "Am I my brother's keeper? Every man must answer for himself." Hence also it is that a multitude of professors think only where they may enjoy the purest ordinances; but where they may have the fairest opportunity to win the souls of others, or in what place or way they may do most good, these things they little or nothing regard.

VIII. With many, pride is a great impediment. If it were to speak to a great man, they would do it, provided it would not displease him. But to go among the multitude, to take pains with a company of mean persons, to sit with them in their humble houses, and there to instruct them, and exhort them from day to day, where is the person that will do this? Alas, these men little consider how low Christ stooped for us, when the God of glory comes down in flesh, and goes preaching among them from city to city! Few rich, and noble, and wise, and mighty, are called. It is the poor chiefly who receive the glad tidings of the gospel.

Lastly, With some also their ignorance of the duty hinders them from performing it. Either they know it not to be a duty, or at least not to be their duty. Perhaps they have not thought much of it, nor been urged to it by their ministers, as they have been to hearing, and praying, and other duties. If this be thy case, who readest this, that mere ignorance or inconsideration has kept thee from it, then I hope now that thou art acquainted with thy duty, thou wilt set about it without further delay.

Objection 1. O, but says one, I have such weak

parts and gifts, that I am unable to manage an exhortation, especially to men of strong natural parts and understanding.

Answer. Use faithfully that ability which thou hast ; not in teaching those of whom thou shouldst learn, but in instructing those that are more ignorant than thyself, and in exhorting those that are negligent in the things which they know. If you cannot speak well yourself, yet you can tell them what God speaks in his word. It is not the excellency of speech that wins souls, but the authority of God manifested by that speech, and the power of his word in the mouth of the speaker.

Objection 2. It is my superiors that need my exhortation and advice ; and is it fit for me to teach or reprove them ? Must the wife teach the husband, of whom the Scripture bids her learn ? Or must children teach their parents, whose duty it is to instruct them ?

Answer. It is fit that husbands should be able to teach their wives, and parents to teach their children ; and God expects they should do so, and therefore commands the inferiors to learn of them. But if they, through their own negligence, or wickedness bring their souls into such danger as that they have the greatest need of advice and reproof themselves, then it is themselves, and not you, that break God's order, by bringing themselves into disability and misery. Matters of mere order and manners must be dispensed with in cases of absolute necessity. Yet let me give you these two cautions :—

1. That you must not pretend necessity when there is none, out of a mere desire of teaching. There is scarcely a more certain evidence of a proud heart, than to be more forward and desirous to teach than to learn, especially toward those that are fitter to teach us.

2. When the necessity of your superiors calls for your exhortation and advice, yet give it with all possible humility, and modesty, and meekness. Let them discern your reverence and submission to their supe-

riority, in the humble manner of your addresses to them. Let them perceive that you do it not out of a mere teaching humour, or proud self-conceitedness. What father, or master, or husband, could take this ill?

Objection 3. Some will further object, that the party is so ignorant, or stupid, or careless, or rooted in sin, and has been so oft exhorted in vain, that there is no hope.

Answer. How know you when there is no hope? Cannot God yet cure him? And must it not be by means? And have not many as far gone been cured? Should not a merciful physician use means while there is life? And is it not inhuman cruelty in you to give up your friend to the devil and damnation as hopeless, upon mere backwardness to your duty, or upon groundless discouragements? What if you had been so given up to yourself when you were ignorant?

Objection 4. But we must not "cast pearls before swine, nor give that which is holy to dogs."

Answer. This language indicates a dispensation of Christ for your own safety. When you are in danger to be torn in pieces, Christ would have you forbear; but what is that to you that are in no such danger? As long as they will hear, you have encouragement to speak, and may not cast them off.

Objection 5. Oh! but it is a friend on whom I have all my dependence; and if I tell him of his sin and misery, I may lose his love, and so be undone.

Answer. Surely no Christian will acknowledge such an objection as this. Yet, I doubt, it oft prevails in the heart. Is the love of thy friend to be more valued than his safety; or thy own benefit by him, than the salvation of his soul? Or wilt thou connive at his damnation, because he is thy friend? Is this thy requital of his kindness?

SECTION III.

Motives to this Duty.

Thirdly, To excite you to diligence in helping all about you to this blessed rest, let me entreat you to consider the following motives.

I. Consider, that nature teaches the duty of communicating good, and grace especially disposes the soul thereto; the neglect, therefore, of this work, is a sin against both nature and grace. He that should never seek after God himself, would be considered by all as graceless; and is not he as certainly graceless, that does not labour for the salvation of others, seeing we are bound to love our neighbour as ourselves? Would you not think that man or woman unnatural, who would leave their own children or neighbours to famish in the streets, while they have plenty of provisions at hand? And is not he more unnatural still, that will let his children or neighbours perish eternally, and will not open his mouth to save them? This certainly is most cruel. Now, that it may appear to you what a cruel thing this neglect of souls is, do but consider these two things,—what a great work it is which thou neglectest; and, what a small matter it is that thou refuseth to do for accomplishing so great a work. First, It is to save thy brother from eternal torments. It is to bring him to everlasting rest, where he may live in inconceivable happiness with God. Secondly, What is it thou art required to do to help him herein? Why, it is to teach him, and persuade him, and lay open to him his sin, his misery, and his duty, till thou hast made him willing to yield to the offers and commands of Christ. And is this so great a matter to do, for attaining such a blessed end? If God had bid you to give them all your estates to win them, or lay down your lives to save them, surely you would have refused, when you will not bestow a little

breath to save them. Is not the soul of a husband, or wife, or child, or neighbour, worth a few words? Surely it is worth this, or it is worth nothing.

II. Consider at what a price Christ did value souls and what he has done for their salvation. He thought them worth his blood and sufferings, and shall not we then think them worth the breath of our mouths? Will you not unite with Christ for so good a work? Will you not do a little where he has done so much?

III. Consider what fit objects of pity unconverted souls are. It is no small misery to be an enemy of God,—unpardoned,—unsanctified,—and without hope of salvation, and exposed to everlasting misery. They are even dead in their trespasses and miseries, and have not hearts to feel them, or to pity themselves. If others do not pity them, they will have no pity on themselves; for it is the nature of their disease to make them pitiless to their own souls, yea, to make them the most cruel destroyers of themselves.

IV. Consider, the same was once thy own case. Thou wast once a slave of satan thyself, and didst go on in the way to condemnation. What if thou hadst been let alone in that way? Whither hadst thou gone? And what had become of thee? It was God's argument with the Israelites to be kind to strangers, that they themselves were once strangers in Egypt; so it may persuade you to show compassion to them that are strangers to Christ, that you were once strangers to him yourselves.

V. Consider the relation in which thou standest to them. It is thy neighbour, thy brother, whom thou art bound to be tender of, and to love as thyself. He that loves not his brother, whom he sees daily, most certainly does not love God whom he has never seen; and does he love his brother, that will stand by and see him go to hell, and never hinder him?

VI. Consider what guilt this neglect will bring upon thy soul.

1. Thou art guilty of the blood of all those souls whom thou dost thus neglect. He that stands by, and sees a man in a pit, and will not pull him out if he

can destroys him ; and he that stands by, while thieves rob, or murderers kill him, and will not help him if he can, is accessory to the deed. And so he that silently suffers men to damn their souls, or lets satan and the world deceive them, and does not offer to help them, will certainly be judged accessory to their ruin.

2. As you are in a measure guilty of their perishing, so are you of every sin which they in the mean time commit. If they were converted, they would break off their course of sinning ; and if you did but do your duty, you know not but they might be converted. As he that is guilty of a man's drunkenness, is guilty of all the sins which that drunkenness causes him to commit ; so he that is guilty of a man's continuing unregenerate, countenances the sins of his unregeneracy.

3. You are also chargeable in a manner with the dishonour done to God. And how much is that ? And how tender should a Christian be of the glory of God, the least part whereof is to be valued more than our lives ?

4. You are not innocent either of the judgments which these men's sins bring upon the town or country where they live. I know you are not such atheists, but you believe it is God that sends sickness, and famine, and war ; and also that it is only sin that moves him thus to manifest his indignation. What doubt then is there, that you are the cause of judgments, when you do not strive against those sins which are the occasion of them ? We have all seen the drunkards, and heard the swearers in our streets, and we would not speak to them : we have all lived in the midst of an ignorant, worldly, unholy people ; and we have not spoken to them with earnestness, plainness, and love. No wonder then if God speak in wrath both to them and us. Eli did not commit the sin himself, but yet he spoke so coldly against it, that he had to participate in the punishment.

VII. Consider how dreadful it will be, to look upon your poor friends eternally in those flames, and to think that your neglect was a chief cause of it ;—that

there was a time when you might have done much to prevent it.

VIII. Consider what joy it will afford you to meet in heaven, those whom you have been instrumental in bringing thither! To see their faces, and join with them for ever in singing the praises of God, whom ye were instruments of bringing to the knowledge and obedience of Christ, what it will be, we know not; but surely, according to our present views, it will be no small joy. "What," says Paul, "is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

IX. Consider how many souls we have drawn or at least hardened or confirmed in the way of ruin! And should we not now be more diligent to draw men to everlasting life? There is not one of us, but has had his companions in sin, especially in the days of his ignorance and unregeneracy. We have enticed them, or encouraged them to sin in various forms; but we cannot so easily bring them from sin again, as we drew them to it. Many are dead already without discovering any symptoms of a saving change, who were our companions in sin. And does it not then become us to do as much to save men, as we have done to destroy them; and to be as merciful to some, as we have been cruel to others?

X. Consider how diligent are the enemies of poor souls to draw them to hell; and if nobody be diligent in drawing them to heaven, what is to become of them? The devil is tempting them night and day. The flesh is ever pleading for its profits and delights. Their companions are ready to entice them to sin, and to increase their prejudice and dislike to holiness. Seeing then their enemies are so many and so powerful, and so diligent in seeking their ruin, shall not Christians be still more unwearied in labouring to win them to Christ and everlasting life?

XI. Consider, the neglect of this duty will very deeply wound you when conscience is awakened. When a man comes to die, conscience will ask him,

“What good hast thou done in thy lifetime? The saving of souls is the greatest of all works; what hast thou done towards this? How many hast thou dealt faithfully with? How many have through thy instrumentality been brought to Christ?” I have often observed, that the consciences of dying men do very much wound them for the neglect of this duty.

XII. Consider, it is now a very seasonable time which you have for this work. Take it therefore while you have it. There are times wherein it is not safe to speak; it may cost you your liberty, or your life; but it is not so now with us. Besides, your neighbours will be here with you but a very little while: they will shortly die, and so must you. Speak to them therefore while you may, and give them no rest till you have prevailed. Do it speedily, for it must be **NOW** or **NEVER**.

XIII. Consider, this is a work of the greatest charity, and yet such as every one of you may perform. If it were to give them money, the poor have it not to give; if it were to fight for them, the weak are not able; if it were to suffer, the fearful will say they cannot; but every one has a tongue to speak to a sinner. The poorest may be thus charitable as well as the rich.

XIV. Consider the happy consequences of this work, where it is faithfully performed.

1. You may be instrumental in the blessed work of saving souls, a work that Christ came down and died for, a work which the angels of God rejoice in, a work which will confer inestimable benefits on those who are converted by you. “If any of you do err from the truth,” says James, “and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” And how can God more highly honour you, than to make you instruments in so great a work?

2. The souls whom you may convert will bless you in time and through eternity. They may be angry with you at first; but if your words prevail

with them, they will bless the day that ever they knew you, and bless God that sent you to speak to them.

3. God will have much glory in every soul which may be converted by you. He will have one more to value and accept of his Son; one more to love him, and daily worship and fear him, and to do him service in his church.

4. The church will be a mighty gainer by it. There will be one less provoker of wrath, and one more to strive with God against sin and judgment, to engage against the sins of the times, and to win others by doctrine and example. If thou couldst but convert one persecuting Saul, he might become a Paul, and do the church more service than ever thou didst thyself.

Lastly, It will bring much advantage to yourselves.

1. It will increase your graces. He that will not let you lose a cup of water which is given for him, will not let you lose these greater works of charity. Besides those that have practised this duty most conscientiously, find by experience that they never go on more speedily and prosperously towards heaven, than when they do most to help others thither along with them. It is not here as with worldly treasure, of which the more you give away, the less you have; but here, the more you give away, the more you have. The exhibiting Christ in his fulness to others, will warm your own hearts, and stir up your love; the opening of the evil and danger of sin to others, will increase your hatred of it, and much engage yourselves against it.

2. It will increase your glory as well as your grace, both as a duty which God will reward, "for they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever;" and also as we shall behold them in heaven, and be their associates in blessedness, whom God made us the instruments of converting on earth.

3. It will give us much peace of conscience, whether we succeed or not, to think that we were faithful, and

did our best to save them, and that their perishing shall not lie at our door, but that we are clear from the blood of all men.

4. It is a work, which, if it succeed, will exceedingly rejoice an honest heart. He that has any sense of God's honour, or the least affection to the soul of his brother, must needs rejoice much at his conversion, whosoever be the instrument, but especially when God makes himself the means of so blessed a work. If God make us the instruments of any temporal good, it is very comfortable; but much more, if he make us the instruments of eternal good.

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Exhortations to this Duty.*

*Lastly*, I shall conclude with a word of entreaty to Christians in general, to engage faithfully and diligently in the performance of this duty.

Up, then, every man that has a tongue, and is a servant of Christ, and do something of your Master's work. Why has he given you a tongue but to speak in his service? And how can you serve him more eminently than by the saving of souls? He that will pronounce you "Blessed" at the last day, and award you "the kingdom prepared for you," because you fed him, and clothed him, and visited him, in his members, will surely pronounce you *Blessed* for so great a work as is the bringing of souls to his kingdom. He that says, "The poor ye have always with you," has left the ungodly always with you, that you may ever have matter to exercise your charity upon. O, if you have the hearts of Christians or men in you, let them yearn over your poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbours. Alas! there is but a step between them, and death, and hell. Many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate, they are lost for ever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the word of God, and the danger of

sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourselves to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, provided you are saved? If so, you have as much cause to pity yourselves; for this is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with a state of grace. Should you not rather say, as the lepers of Samaria, "We do not well; this is a day of glad tidings, and we do hold our peace." Has God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? Is it not hypocrisy to pray daily for their conversion and salvation, and never once endeavour to accomplish it? Can you pray, "Hallowed be thy name," and never endeavour to bring men to hallow it, nor hinder them from profaning it? Can you pray, "Thy kingdom come," and yet never labour for the coming or increase of his kingdom? Is it no grief to your hearts to see the kingdom of satan flourish, and to behold him leading captive such a multitude of souls? You profess to be soldiers in Christ's army; and will you do nothing against his prevailing enemies? You pray also daily, "Thy will be done;" and should you not then daily persuade men to do it, and dissuade them from sinning against it? You pray, that God would forgive them their sins, and that he would not lead them into temptation, but deliver them from evil: and yet will you not help them to repent and believe, that they may be forgiven, and assist them against temptations, and seek to deliver them from the greatest evil?

As this duty lies upon the godly in general, so it lies upon some more especially, according as God has qualified them for it. To them therefore, I will now more particularly address my exhortation; whether they be such as have more opportunity and advantages, for this work, or such as have better abilities to perform it.

I. All you to whom God has given more learning and knowledge, and endowed with better powers of utterance than your neighbours, God expects this duty especially at your hand. The strong are made to help the weak, and those that see must guide the

blind. God looks for this faithful improvement of gifts, which, if you neglect, it were better for you that you never had received them; for they will aggravate your guilt, and increase your condemnation.

II. Of all those that have special familiarity with individual ungodly men, and that have interest in them, God expects this duty at their hands. Christ himself did eat and drink with publicans and sinners, but it was only to be their physician, not their companion. Who knows but God gave you a special interest in them to this very end, that you might be the means of their salvation? They that will not regard the words of a stranger, will regard a brother or a sister, a husband or a wife, or near friend. Besides, the bond of friendship engages you to more kindness and compassion than ordinary.

III. Men of wealth and authority have excellent advantage for this duty, especially with those that are dependent upon them. O, what good might such do, that have many under them, and that are the leaders of the country, if they had but hearts to improve their interest and advantage with them for their salvation! Little do you that are such, think of the obligation which in this respect lies upon you. Have you not all your honour and riches from God? And are you not bound to employ them all in his service, and for his glory? Do you not know who it is that has said, "To whom men commit much, from them will they expect the more;" "Them that honour me, I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." O, therefore, as you value the honour of God, your own comfort, and the salvation of souls, improve your interest to the utmost for God. Let men see that you excel others as much in piety, heavenliness, compassion, and diligence in God's work, as you do in riches and honour in the world.

IV. Physicians who are much about dying men, should in a special manner make conscience of this duty. In time of sickness and danger, the ear is more open, and the heart less stubborn than in time of health. O, therefore, you that are of this honourable

profession, do not think this a work beside your calling, as if it belonged to none but ministers, except you think it beside your calling to be compassionate, or to be Christians. O help, therefore, to fit your patients for heaven; and whether you see they are for life or death, teach them both how to live and how to die, and give them medicines for their souls as well as for their bodies.

V. The ministers of the gospel have special opportunity for this work of helping others to heaven. As they have, or should have more ability than others, so it is their special duty; and every one expects it at their hands, and will better submit to their teaching than to that of others.

1. Be sure that the saving of souls be the main end of your studies and preaching. O, do not propose any low and base ends to yourselves. This is the end of your calling; let it be also the end of your endeavours. God forbid that you should spend a week's study to please the people, or to seek the advancement of your own reputation. Dare you appear in the pulpit on such a business, and speak for yourselves, when you are sent and profess to speak for Christ? Dare you waste the Lord's day in seeking applause, which God has set apart for himself? O let the vigour of your persuasions show, that you are sensible on how weighty a business you are sent. O preach with that seriousness and fervour as men that believe their own doctrine, and that know their hearers must either be converted or be damned. What you would do to save them from everlasting burnings, that do while you have the opportunity, that people may discern that you are in good earnest, and mean as you speak.

2. Do not think that all your work is in your studies, and in the pulpit. I confess that is great; but alas! it is but a small part of your task. You are shepherds, and must know every sheep, and what is their disease, and mark their strayings, and help to cure them, and fetch them home. O learn of Paul to preach publicly, and from house to house, warning every one night and day, with many tears. Let



there not be a soul under your charge that shall not be particularly instructed and watched over by you. Go from house to house daily, and inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what grounds they build their hopes of salvation ; and whether they walk uprightly, and perform the duties of their several relations, and use the means to increase their abilities. See whether they daily worship God in their families, and set them in the way and teach them how to do it. Confer with them about the doctrines and practice of religion, and how they receive and profit by public teaching, and answer all their carnal objections. Maintain familiarity with them, that you may maintain your interest in them, and improve all your interest in them for God. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." O be not asleep when the wolf is waking ! Let your eye be quick in observing the dangers and strayings of your people. If jealousies, heart-burnings, or contentions arise among them, quench them before they break out into raging, irresistible flames. As soon as you see any turn worldly, or proud, or factious, or self-conceited, or disobedient, or cold and slothful in duty, delay not, but immediately attempt his recovery.

3. Do not deal slightly with any. Some will not tell their people plainly of their sins, because they are great men, and some because they are godly, as if none but the poor and the wicked should be plainly dealt with. Do not you so, but reprove them sharply, (though differently, and with wisdom,) that they may be sound in the faith.

And as you must be plain and serious, so labour to be skilful and discreet, that the manner may somewhat answer to the excellency of the matter.

Our language must not only be suited to our matter, but also to our hearers, or else the best sermon may be the worst. Study and pray, pray and study, till you become "workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," that your people may not be ashamed, or weary of hearing you ; and

besides unfolding clearly the doctrine of the gospel, study that you may be master of your people's affections.

4. See that your life teaches, as well as your sermons. Do not contradict and confute your own doctrine by your practice. Be as forward in a holy and heavenly life, as you are in pressing it on others. Let your conversation be as edifying and spiritual as you teach them theirs should be. Let men see that you use not the ministry only as a trade to live by; but that your very hearts are wholly set upon the welfare of their souls. Whatsoever meekness, humility, condescension, or self-denial you teach them from the gospel, teach it them also by your example. Alas! that ever pride, emulation, hypocrisy, or covetousness, should come into a pulpit! They are hateful in the shops and street, but more hateful in the church; but in the pulpit most of all. What an odious sight is it, to see pride and ambition stand up to preach humility, and hypocrisy to preach sincerity, and earthly-mindedness to preach a heavenly conversation! Do I need to tell you that are teachers of others, that we have but a little while longer to preach, and a few breaths more to breathe, and then we must come down, and give an account of our work? Do I need to tell you, we must die and be judged as well as our people, or that justice is most severe about the sanctuary, and that judgment begins at the house of God, and revenge is most implacable about the altar, and jealousy hottest about the ark? Have you not learned these lessons from Korah, Nadab, and Abihu, Eli, Uzzah, and the Bethshemites, though I had said nothing? Can you forget that even some of our tribe shall say at the day of judgment, "Lord, we have taught in thy name," who yet shall be ordered to depart with, "I know you not?"

VI. The last class whom I would persuade to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest, are parents, and masters of families. All you that God has entrusted with children or servants, O consider what duty lies on you for the furthering of their salva-

tion. That this exhortation may be the more effectual with you, I will lay down several considerations for you seriously to think on:—

1. What plain and pressing commands of God are there that require this great duty at your hand! “And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” “Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Many similar precepts you will find, especially in the book of Proverbs. So that you see it is a work which the Lord of heaven and earth has laid upon you; and how then dare you neglect it?

2. It is a duty which you owe your children in point of justice. From you they received the defilement and misery of their natures, and therefore you owe them all possible help for their recovery.

3. Consider how near your children are to you, and then you will perceive, that from this natural relation, they have a special interest in your utmost help. Your children are, as it were, parts of yourselves. If they prosper when you are dead, you take it almost as if you lived and prospered in them; and should you not be peculiarly concerned that they may enjoy everlasting rest?

4. You will be witnesses against yourselves, if you neglect their souls. Your great care, and pains, and cost for their bodies, will rise up in judgment against you and condemn you. You can spend yourselves in toiling and caring for their bodies, and even venture sometimes upon unwarrantable courses, and all to provide for their bodies; but have you not much more reason to provide for their souls? Do you not believe that your children must be everlastingly happy or miserable, when this life is ended? And should not this be considered by you in the first place?

5. God has made your children to be your charge ; yea, and your servants too. Every one will confess they are the minister's charge, and that it is a dreadful thing for him to neglect them, when God has said, " If thou warn not the wicked of their evil way, their blood will I require at thy hand !" And is not your charge as great and as dreadful as his ? Have not you, in fact, a greater charge of your own families than any minister has ? Yea, doubtless, and your duty is to teach, and admonish, and reprove, and watch over them ; and if you neglect them, God will require at your hands the blood of their souls. This is the greatest charge that you were ever intrusted with ; and woe to you, if you prove unfaithful, and betray your trust, and suffer them to be ignorant for want of your teaching, or wicked for want of your admonition or correction !

6. Look into the dispositions and lives of your children, and see what a work there is for you to do. It is not one sin that you must correct, but thousands ; their name is legion, for they are many. It is not one weed that must be rooted up ; the field is overspread with them. Consider, too, how hard it is to prevail against any one of those sins ! They are hereditary diseases, bred in their natures ; and how tenacious are all things of that which is natural ! Besides, the things you must teach them are quite above them, yea, contrary to the interest and desires of their flesh. How hard is it to persuade them to deny themselves, and displease the flesh, to forgive their enemies, to love those that hate them, to watch against temptations, to avoid the occasions and the appearances of evil, to believe in a crucified Saviour, to rejoice in tribulation, to trust upon a bare word of promise, to make God their chief delight, and to have their hearts in heaven, even while they live on earth ! None of all this is easy. O that God would make all you that are parents sensible what a work and charge lies upon you ! You that neglect this important work, and talk to your families of nothing but the world, I tell you the blood of souls lies on you. Make as light of it as

you will, if you repent not and amend, the Lord will shortly call you to an account for your guiltiness of your children's everlasting ruin,

7. Consider what sorrows you prepare for yourselves, by the neglect of your children. Think of Eli's sad example. Though he admonished his children, yet it was out of season, he did it not soon enough; he suffered them to have their will too long. He dealt not with them till they were grown hardened in their sin. Neither was his admonition severe enough according to his authority.

(1.) You can expect nothing else but that they will be thorns in your very eyes, and you may thank yourselves if they prove so, seeing they are thorns of your own planting.

(2.) If you should repent of your negligence, and be saved yourselves, yet is it nothing to you to think of the damnation of your children? You know God has said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Methinks it should be a heart-breaking to all you that have unregenerate children. Methinks you should weep over them every time you look them in the face—remembering that they are on the way to eternal ruin.

(3.) But yet worse than all this will it prove to you, if you die in sin yourselves; for then you will be miserable as well as they; and O what a greeting will there be between ungodly parents and ungodly children! How dreadful will it be to your tormented souls to hear your children cry out against you, "All this that we suffer is owing to you. You should have taught us better, and did not. You should have restrained us from sin, and corrected us, but you did not." O what an aggravation will such bitter cries be to your misery!

9. Consider, on the other hand, what a world of comfort you may have, if you be faithful in performing this duty. If you should not succeed, yet you have delivered your own souls; and though it be sad, yet not so sad as if you had been unfaithful, for you may at least have peace in your own consciences.

But if, on the other hand, you do succeed, the comfort will be inexpressible ; for,

(1.) Godly children will be affectionate to you, when a little riches, or things of a worldly nature, will often make ungodly children cast off natural affection.

(2.) Godly children will be obedient to you. They dare not disobey and provoke you, because of the command of God, except you should command them that which is unlawful, and then they must obey God rather than man.

(3.) If you should fall into want, they will be faithful in relieving you, as knowing they are bound by the double bond of nature and of grace.

(4.) They will be helpers to your souls ; they will minister to your spiritual comfort ; they will delight you by speaking of heaven, and with all holy conference and actions ; while wicked children will be grieving you by their cursing, and swearing, or drunkenness, or other sins.

(5.) When you are in trouble, or sickness, or at death, they will be at hand to advise, and to support you. They will strive with God in prayer for you ; and O what a comfort is it to a parent to have a child that has the spirit of prayer and an interest in God ! How much good may he do you by his importunity with God ! On the other hand, what a distress is it to have children, who, when you lie sick, can do no more than look in silence on your misery !

(6.) If God make you the instruments of your children's conversion, you will have a share in all the good they may do, during their lives. All the good they do to their brethren, or to the church of Christ, and all the honour they bring to God, will redound to your happiness, as having been remotely instruments of it.

(7.) What a comfort will it be to you all your lives, to think that you will live with them forever in heaven ! But the greatest joy of all will be when you come to the possession of the inheritance, and you shall be able to say, " Here am I, and the children

thou hast given me." And are not all these comforts enough to persuade you to this duty?

10. Consider that the welfare of church and state lies mainly on this duty of well educating children; and, without this, all other means are like to be less successful. I seriously profess to you, that I think all sins and miseries of the land may acknowledge this sin for their great nurse and propagator. O what happy churches might we have, if parents did their duty to their children! Any reasonable government would do better with a well taught people, than the best will do with the ungodly. It is not good laws and orders that will reform us, if reformation begin not at home. The first work towards the reforming and making happy a church and commonwealth, lies in the good education of your children. The most of this is your work; and, if it be left undone, and then they come to ministers ignorant, and hardened in their sins, alas! what can a minister do? Whereas if they came trained up in the principles of religion, and in the practice of godliness, and were taught the fear of God in their youth, O what an encouragement would this be to ministers, and how would the work go on in our hands!

11. Consider what excellent advantages you that are parents have above all others for the saving of your children.

(1.) They are under your hands while they are young, and tender, and flexible; but they come to ministers when they are grown older, and stiffer, and settled in their ways, and think themselves too good to be catechized, and too old to be taught. You have a twig to bend, we an oak. You have the young plants of sin to pluck up; we the deep-rooted vices. You have the soft and tender earth to plough in; we have the hard and stony ways, that have been trodden on by many years' practice of evil. Custom has not ensnared and engaged our little ones to the ways of sin. Their consciences are not yet seared with a custom of sinning, and long resisting grace. But of old sinners, God himself has said, "Can the Ethiopian

change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Does not the experience of all the world show you the power of education? What else makes all the children of Jews to be Jews, and all the children of Mohammedans to be Mohammedans, and of Christians to be by profession Christians, and of each sect or party in religion to follow their parents, and the custom of the place? Now, what an advantage have you to use all this for the furtherance of the eternal happiness of your children, and possess them strongly beforehand against sin, and so Satan would come to them under some of those disadvantages under which Christ now comes to them!

(2.) You have the affections of your children more than any others. None in the world has the same interest in their hearts as you. Persons will receive that counsel from a friend which they would not receive from an enemy or a stranger. Now, your children cannot but know that you are their friends, and, when you advise them in love, they cannot but love you in return. Their love is loose and arbitrary to others, but to you it is determinate and fast. Nature has almost necessitated them to love you. O, therefore, improve your interest in them for their eternal good.

(3.) You have also the greatest authority over them. You may command them, and they dare not disobey you, or else it is for the most part your own fault, for you can make them obey you in your business in the world, yea you may correct them to enforce obedience. Your authority is the most unquestioned authority in the world; and, therefore, if you do not use it to constrain them to the works of God, you are without excuse. Besides, their whole dependence is on you for maintenance and support. They know you can either give them, or deny them what you have, and so punish and reward them at your pleasure. But on ministers or neighbours they have no such dependence.

(4.) You know the temper and inclinations of your



children, what vices they are most inclined to, and what instruction or reproof they most need; but ministers that live not with them cannot know this.

(5.) You are always with them, and so have opportunity, not only to know their faults, but to apply the remedy. You may be often talking to them of the word of God, and reminding them of their state and duty, and may set home every word of advice, as they are in the house with you, or in the shop, or in the field at work. O what an excellent advantage is this, if God but give you hearts to use it! Especially you mothers, remember this. You are more with your children while they are little ones than their fathers; be you, therefore, often teaching them as soon as they are capable of learning. Plutarch mentions a Spartan woman, who, when her neighbours were showing their apparel and jewels, brought out her children virtuous and well taught, and said, "These are my ornaments and jewels." Oh how much more will this adorn you, than gold or pearls! You are naturally of more tender affections than men; and will it not move you to think that your children may perish for ever? O then, I beseech you, for the sake of the children you love, teach them, admonish them, watch over them, give them no rest till you have brought them to Christ.

Thus I have showed you reason enough to make you diligent in teaching your children, if reason will serve, as methinks among reasonable creatures it should.

### BOOK III.

#### A DIRECTORY FOR GETTING AND KEEPING THE HEART IN HEAVEN, BY THE PRACTICE OF THAT EXCEL- LENT DUTY OF HEAVENLY MEDITATION.

IN the last book, I have chiefly pressed those duties which must be used for the attainment of this everlasting rest. In this I shall chiefly handle those which are necessary to raise the heart to God, and to an heavenly and comfortable life on earth. It is a truth too evident that many of God's children do not enjoy that sweet life, and blessed estate in this world, which God their Father has provided for them, that is, which he offers them in his promises, and charges upon them in his precepts, and brings even to their hands in all his means and mercies. God has set open heaven to us in his word, and told every humble sincere Christian, that they shall shortly there live with himself in inconceivable glory: and yet where is the man that is duly affected with this promise? Whose heart leaps for joy at the hearing of the news? and who is willing, in hopes of heaven, to leave this world? Even the godly have as strange thoughts of it, as if God did but delude us, and there was no such glory; and are almost as loath to die as men without hope. The consideration of this strange disagreement between our professions and affections, caused me to suspect that there was some secret lurking unbelief in all our hearts. And because I find another cause to be the carelessness, forgetfulness, and idleness of the soul, and not keeping in action that faith which we have, I have here attempted the removal of that cause, by prescribing a course for the daily acting of those graces which must bring celestial delights into the heart.

I have here prescribed thee, reader, the most delightful task to the spirit, and the most tedious to the flesh, that ever men on earth were employed in. I did it first only for myself, but am loath to conceal the means that I have found so consolatory. If thou be one that wilt not be persuaded to a course so laborious, but wilt only go on in thy task of common formal duties, thou mayest let it alone, and so be destitute of delights, except such as the world, and thy forms can afford thee: but then do not for shame complain for want of comfort, when thou dost wilfully reject it; and be not such an hypocrite as to pray for it, while thou dost refuse to labour for it. If thou say, thy comfort is all in Christ, I must tell thee it is a Christ remembered and loved, and not a Christ forgotten or only talked of, that will solidly comfort thee.

This is the great duty, which I chiefly intended when I began this subject, and which I have reserved to the last, because I know men's memories are treacherous, yet apt to retain the last thing that is spoken, though they forget all that went before. My dear friends, it is a pity that one should forget any thing of that which so nearly concerns us as does this eternal rest of the saints; but if you must needs forget something, let it be any thing else rather than this; let it rather be all that I have hitherto said, than this last use of HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION.

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## CHAPTER I.

### MOTIVES TO HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS.

Is there a rest remaining for us? Why then are our thoughts no more upon it? Why are not our hearts continually there? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? Brethren, ask your hearts in good earnest, what is the cause of this neglect. Has the eternal God provided us such a glory, and pro-

mised to take us up to dwell with himself? And is not this worth thinking upon? Should not the strongest desires of our hearts be after it, and the daily delights of our souls be fixed on it? Do we believe this, and can we yet forget and neglect it? How freely and how frequently do we think of our friends, our pleasures, our labours, our lusts, our studies, our news,—yea, our very miseries, our wrongs, our sufferings, and our fears! But where is the Christian whose heart is on his rest? Why, brethren, what is the matter? Why are we not taken up with the views of glory? Are we so full of joy, that we need no more? Or is there no matter in heaven for our joyous thoughts?

But let me turn my reprehension to exhortation. And here I have the more hope, because I address myself to men of conscience, that dare not wilfully disobey God, to men whose relations to God are many and near, and therefore methinks there should need the fewer words to persuade their hearts to him. Yea, I speak to no other than those whose portion is there, whose hopes are there, and who have forsaken all that they may enjoy this glory. And shall I be discouraged from persuading such to be heavenly minded? Why, my fellow Christians, if you will not hear and obey, who will? Well may we be discouraged to exhort the poor, blind, ungodly world, and may say as Moses, “Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me?” Whoever thou art, therefore, that readest these lines, I require thee, as thou tenderest thy allegiance to the God of heaven, as ever thou hopest for a part in this glory, that thou immediately take thy heart to task. Chide it for its wilful strangeness to God; turn thy thoughts from the pursuit of vanity; bend thy soul to study eternity; busy it about the life to come; habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not these thoughts be seldom or cursory, but settle upon them; bathe thy soul in heavenly delights; drench thine affections in these rivers of pleasure, or rather in the sea of consolation; and if thy backward

soul begin to flag, and thy thoughts to fly abroad, call them back, hold them to their work, and when thou hast once in obedience to God tried this work, and followed on till thou hast got acquainted with it, and kept a close guard upon thy thoughts till they are accustomed to obey, thou wilt then find thyself in the suburbs of heaven, and, as it were, in a new world; thou wilt then find, that there is, indeed, sweetness in the work of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy; thou wilt meet with those abundant consolations, which thou hast prayed, and panted, and groaned after, and which so few Christians ever here obtain, because they know not the way to them, or else make not conscience of walking in it.

My beloved friends, let me bespeak your consciences in the name of Christ, and command you, by his authority, that you faithfully set about this weighty duty, and fix your eye more steadfastly on your heavenly rest, and daily delight in the forethought thereof. I beseech you, if ever I shall prevail with you in any thing, let me prevail with you in this, to set your hearts where you expect a rest and treasure. Do not wonder that I persuade you so earnestly; though, indeed, if we were truly reasonable in spiritual things, as we are in temporal, it would be a wonder that men should need so much persuasion to so sweet and plain a duty; but I know the employment is high, the heart earthly, the hindrances many and great, and therefore I fear, before we have done and explained more fully the nature of the duty, that you will confess all these persuasions little enough.

I will here lay down some moving considerations, which, if you will but vouchsafe to ponder thoroughly and deliberately weigh with an impartial judgment, I doubt not they will prove effectual with your hearts and make you resolve upon this excellent duty.

I. Consider that a heart set on heaven will be one of the most unquestionable evidences of thy sincerity and of a work of saving grace upon thy soul. You are much in inquiring after marks of sincerity, and I blame you not; it is dangerous mistaking in a matter

wherein a man's everlasting salvation is concerned You are often asking, How shall I know that I am truly sanctified? Why, here is a mark that will not deceive you, if you can truly say that you are possessed of it,—even a heart set upon heaven. Would you have an infallible sign, not from me, or from any man, but from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, which all the enemies of the use of marks can make no exception against? Why, here is one, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Know once assuredly where your heart is, and you may easily know that your treasure is there. God is the saints' treasure and happiness; heaven is the place where they shall fully enjoy him. A heart set upon heaven, is therefore, nothing more than a heart set upon God, desiring this full enjoyment. And surely a heart set upon God through Christ, is a true evidence of saving grace. External actions are most easily discovered; but those of the heart are the surest evidences. When thy learning will be no good proof of thy grace; when thy knowledge, thy duties, thy gifts, will fail thee; when arguments drawn from thy tongue and thy hand may be confuted; yet then will this argument from the bent of thy heart prove thee sincere. Take a poor Christian that has a weak understanding, a failing memory, a stammering tongue, yet whose heart is set on God; he has chosen him for his portion, his thoughts are on eternity, his desires are there his dwelling there; he considers that day a day of imprisonment wherein he has not taken one refreshing view of heaven: I had rather die in this man's condition, and have my soul in his soul's case, than in the case of him that has the most eminent gifts, and is most admired by his fellow-men, whose heart is not thus taken up with God. The man whom Christ will find out at the last day, and condemn for want of a wedding garment, will be he that wants this frame of heart. The question will not then be, How much hast thou known, or professed, or talked? but, how much hast thou loved, and where was thy heart? Why, then, Christians, as you would have a sure tes-

timony of the love of God, and a clear proof of your title to glory, labour to get your hearts above. God will acknowledge that you truly love him; and take you for his faithful friends, when he sees your hearts are set upon him. Get but your hearts once truly in heaven, and without all question ye yourselves will follow. If sin and satan keep not thence your affections, they will never be able to keep away your persons.

II. Consider that a heart in heaven is the highest excellency of your soul, and the noblest part of your Christian disposition. As there is not only a difference between men and beasts, but also among men, between the noble and the base; so there is not only a common excellency, whereby a Christian differs from the world, but also a peculiar nobleness of soul, whereby the more excellent differ from the rest: and this lies especially in a higher and more heavenly frame of spirit. O, to hear such an heavenly saint, who has been wrapt up in his contemplations of God, and is newly come down from the views of Christ,—what discoveries will he make of those superior regions! What ravishing expressions drop from his lips! How high and sacred is his discourse! This, this is the noble Christian. As those are the most famous mountains that are highest; and those the fairest trees that are tallest; and those the most glorious pyramids whose tops reach nearest to heaven: so is he the choicest Christian, whose heart is most frequently, and most delightfully there. For my part, I value this man before the ablest, the richest, the most learned man in the world.

III. Consider that a heavenly mind is a joyful mind, and the nearest and the surest way to a life of comfort. Can a man be at the fire and not be warm; or in the sunshine, and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? What could make so many frozen uncomfortable Christians, but living so far as they do from heaven? And what makes some few so warm and comfortable, but their living higher than others do, and their frequent near

access to God? Beloved friends if we would but try this life with God, and keep our hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us, and all our graces be fresh and green! How would the face of our souls be changed, and all that is within us rejoice! How would we forget our winter sorrows, and withdraw our souls from our sad retirements! How early would we rise, as birds in the spring, to sing the praise of our great Creator! O Christian, get above! Believe it, that region is warmer than this here below. Those that have been there have found it so, and those that have come thence have told us so. I dare appeal to thy own experience, or to the experience of any soul that knows what the joys of a Christian are. When is it that you have the largest comforts? Is it not after such an exercise as this, when thou hast raised up thy heart, and conversed with God, and talked with the inhabitants of the upper world, and viewed the mansions of the saints and angels, and filled thy soul with the fore-thoughts of glory?

Brethren, if you have never tried this life of heavenly contemplation, I do not wonder that you walk uncomfortably, that you are always complaining, and live amidst continual sorrows. Can you have comforts from God, and never think of him? Can heaven rejoice you, when you do not remember it? Does any thing in the world gladden you, when you think not of it? Must not every thing first enter by your judgment and consideration, before it can delight your heart and affections? If you were possessed of all the treasures of the earth; if you had a title to the highest dignities and dominions, and yet never thought of them, surely they would never rejoice you. Whom then should we blame, that we are so void of consolation, but our own negligent, unskilful hearts? God has provided for us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads, and we will not so much as think of it. He exhibits it in the Gospel to us, and bids us behold it and rejoice; but we will not so much as look at it; and yet we complain of want of comfort



What a perverse course is this, both against God and our own joys ! It is by believing that we are filled with joy and peace ; and no longer than we continue our believing. It is in hope that the saints rejoice, yea, in the hope of the glory of God, and no longer than they continue hoping. God's Spirit works our comforts, by setting our own spirits to work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. God delights his people, by taking them as it were by the hand, and leading them into heaven, and showing them himself, and their everlasting rest with him. God does not cast in our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things ; but as he gives to man the fruits of the earth, while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dress it, so does he give the joys of the soul. Yet I do not deny, that if any should so think to work out his own comfort by meditation, as to attempt it in his own strength, and not do all in subordination to God, nor perceive the necessity of the Spirit's assistance, the work will prove like the workman, and the comfort he would gather from it mere vanity ; even as the husbandman's labour without the sun, and rain, and blessing of God.

Though perhaps in some extraordinary cases, God may cast extraordinary joys into the soul, yet this is not his usual way. And if you observe the spirit of most forlorn, uncomfortable, despairing Christians, you will find the reason to be, their ungrounded expectation of such extraordinary joys ; and accordingly their spirits are tossed up and down, and are most inconstant. Sometimes when they meet with such joys, or at least think so, they are cheerful and lifted up ; but because these are usually short-lived joys, they are soon cast down ; and ordinarily that is their more lasting temper. Thus they are tossed up and down as a ship at sea, but are always in extremes. Whereas God is most constant ; Christ is the same, Heaven the same, the promises the same ; and if we took the right course for obtaining our comfort from these, surely our comforts would be more settled and constant, though not always the same.

IV. Consider that a heart in heaven will be an excellent preservative against temptations, and a powerful means to kill thy corruptions. God can prevent our sinning, though we be careless; and keep off the temptation which we would draw upon ourselves, and sometimes does so, but this is not his usual course, nor is this our safest way to escape. When the mind is either idle, or ill employed, the devil needs not a great advantage. When he finds the thoughts let out on lust, revenge, ambition, or deceit, what an opportunity has he to excite us to practise these sins! Nay, if he finds but the mind empty, there is room for any thing that he chooses to bring in; but when he finds the heart in heaven, what hope can he have that any of his motions will take? Let him entice to any forbidden course, or show us the bait of any pleasure, the soul will return Nehemiah's answer, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come down." This will preserve us from temptation in several ways.

1. A heavenly mind will protect us from temptation, by keeping the heart employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us. As it is an encouragement to a thief to see your doors open, and nobody within, so it encourages satan to find your hearts idle; but when the heart is taken up with God, it will not have time to hearken to temptations; it will not have time to be lustful and wanton, ambitious or worldly.

2. A heavenly mind is fortified against temptation, because it clears the understanding in spiritual matters of the greatest importance. A man whose "conversation is in heaven," has truer and livelier apprehensions of things concerning God and his soul, than any reading or learning can beget. Though he may perhaps be ignorant in divers controversies and other matters that less concern salvation, yet those truths which most establish his soul, and preserve him from temptation, he knows far better than the greatest scholars. He has so deep an insight into the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of sensual delights, that temptations have little power

over him ; for these earthly vanities are satan's baits, which, though they may take much with the undiscerning world, yet with the clear-sighted Christian, they have lost their force. "In vain," says Solomon, "is the net spread in the sight of any bird ;" and usually in vain does satan lay his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them. We set our sentinels on the highest place that is near us, that they may discern all the motions of the enemy ; and in vain does the enemy lay his ambuscades when we stand over him on some eminence, and see all he does. When the heavenly mind is above with God, we may far more easily from thence discover every danger that lies below, and the whole method of the devil in deceiving. Satan's temptations are laid on the earth : earth is the place, and earth is the ordinary bait. How shall these ensnare the Christian who has left the earth, and walks with God ? Christians, do you not sensibly perceive, that when your hearts are seriously fixed on heaven, you immediately become wiser than before ? Are not your understandings more solid ; and your thoughts more sober ; and your apprehensions more true than before ?

It is this that makes a dying man usually wiser than other men, because he looks on eternity as near ; and, knowing he must very shortly be there, he has more deep and heart-piercing thoughts of it, than he used to have in the time of health and prosperity. Hence it is, that many who were cheated with the world, and bewitched by sin, then come to themselves, so far as to have a more correct judgment than they had ; and that some of the most bitter enemies of the saints would give a world to be saints themselves, and would fain die in the condition of those whom they hated, even as Balaam, when he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Surely, a believer, if he improve his faith, may ordinarily have truer and more quickening apprehensions of the life to come, in the time of his health, than an unbeliever has at the hour of his death.

3. A heavenly mind is fortified against temptations,

because the affections are prepossessed with the high delights of another world. When a man is not affected with good, though his understanding clearly apprehends the truth, it is easy for satan to entice his soul. Mere speculations, however true, which sink not into the affections, are poor preservatives against temptations. He that loves most, and not he that knows most, will most easily resist the motions of sin. There is in a Christian a kind of spiritual taste, whereby he knows these things as well as by the mere reasoning faculty. The will as sweetly relishes goodness, as the understanding does truth, and here lies much of a Christian's strength. When thou hast had a fresh, delightful taste of heaven, thou wilt not be so easily persuaded from it. O that you would be persuaded to try this course, to be much in feeding on the hidden manna, to be frequently tasting the delights of heaven. How would this elevate thy resolutions, and make thee laugh at the follies of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys! If the devil had assaulted Peter on the mount, when he beheld the transfiguration of Christ, and Moses and Elias talking with him, would he so easily have drawn him to deny his Lord, with all that glory before his eyes? No! the devil took a greater advantage, when he had him in the high priest's hall, in the midst of danger and evil company, and his master appeared shorn of all his glory,—and then he prevailed. So, if he should assault a Christian, when he is in the mount with Christ, what would such a soul say? "Get thee behind me, Satan: wouldst thou persuade me with trifling pleasures, and steal my heart from this my rest? Wouldst thou have me sell these joys for nothing? Is there any honour or delight, compared with this? Or can that be profit which loseth me this?"

4. If the heart is set on heaven, a man is under God's protection; and therefore, if satan then assault him, God is more engaged to defend him. He will doubtless stand by us, and say, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in thy

weakness." When a man is in the way of God's blessing, he is in less danger of sin's enticings.

Let me, then, entreat thee, Christian, whilst thou art exposed to temptation in this sinful world, to use much this powerful remedy. Keep close with God, by a heavenly walk, and, when temptation comes, turn thy thoughts to heaven. Thou wilt find this a surer remedy than any resistance thou canst make.

V. Consider that a heart set on heaven will preserve the vigour of all your graces, and put life into all your duties. It is the heavenly Christian that is the lively Christian; and, on the other hand, it is our strangeness to heaven that makes us so dull and lifeless. It is the end that quickens to the use of all the means; and the more frequently and clearly this end is beheld, the more vigorous will all our motions be. How unweariedly do men labour, and how fearlessly do they venture, when they have the prospect of a rich prize! How will the soldier hazard his life, and the mariner pass through stormy oceans, and compass sea and land, in the hope of acquiring an uncertain, perishing treasure! O what life then would it put into a Christian's endeavours, if he would frequently think of his everlasting treasure? We run slowly, and strive sluggishly, because we so little mind the prize. Thy life is in heaven, and thy strength is in heaven, and thence thou must daily fetch them, if thou wilt have them. For want of this recourse to heaven, thy soul is as a candle that is not lighted, and thy duties as a sacrifice which has no fire. Light thy candle at this flame, and feed it daily with oil from thence, and see if it will not shine. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if thy offerings will not burn. Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if thy affections will not be warm. Thou bewailest thy want of love to God, lift up then the eye of faith to Heaven; behold his beauty, contemplate his excellencies, and see whether his amiableness will not fire thy affections, and his perfect goodness rejoice thy heart.

Besides, the fire which you fetch from heaven for your sacrifices, is no false or strange fire: as your live-

liness will be greater, so will it also be more sincere. A man may have a great deal of fervor in affections and duties, and all prove but common and unsound, when raised upon common grounds and motives. Your zeal will partake of the nature of those things by which it is actuated; the zeal therefore which is kindled by your meditations on heaven, is likely to prove an heavenly zeal; and the liveliness of spirit which you bring from the face of God, will be a divine life.

VI. Consider that frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordial under the afflictions of life; first, to sustain our spirits, and make our sufferings far more easy; secondly, to keep us from repining, and make us endure them with patience and joy; and, thirdly, to strengthen our resolutions, that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble. What will not a believer endure, when he thinks of the rest to which it tends? What if the way be rough? Can it be tedious, if it lead to heaven? O sweet sickness! sweet reproaches, imprisonments, or death, which conduct to our future rest. The Christian may say as David, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." He may say of the promise of this rest, as David of God's law, "Unless it had been my delight, I had perished in mine affliction." As therefore, thou wilt then be ready with David to pray, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near;" so let it be thy own chief care not to be far from God and heaven when trouble is near, and thou wilt then find him to be unto thee "a very present help in trouble." Then, "though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be in the vine; though the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stall: yet mayst thou rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of thy salvation." No sufferings are any thing to us, so far as we have the foresight of this salvation. Neither bolts, nor bars, nor distance of place can shut out these supporting joys, because they

cannot confine our faith and thoughts, although they may confine our flesh. Christ and faith are both spiritual, and therefore, prisons and banishments cannot hinder their intercourse. Even when persecution and fear have shut the doors, Christ can come in, and stand in the midst, and say to his disciples, "Peace be unto you." Paul and Silas can be in heaven, even when they are locked up in the inner prison, and their bodies scourged, and their feet fast in the stocks. The martyrs found more rest amidst the flames, than their persecutors amidst all their pomp and tyranny, because they foresaw the flames they escaped, and the rest to which that fiery chariot was conveying them. It is not the place that gives rest, but the presence of Christ in it. Why then, Christian, keep thy soul above with Christ; be as little as may be out of his company, and then all conditions will be alike to thee; for that is the best estate to thee, in which thou possessest most of him. Nothing can make us rejoice in tribulation, except we can draw our joy from heaven. How came Abraham to leave his country, and follow God he knew not whither? Why, because "he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." What made Moses choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt? It was because "he had respect to the recompense of reward." Yea, it is evident that our Lord himself drew encouragement under his sufferings from the foresight of his glory: "For the joy that was set before him," says the apostle, "he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Who, indeed, can wonder that pain, and sorrow, poverty and sickness, should be exceedingly grievous to that man who cannot see the end; or that death should be the king of terrors to him who cannot see the life beyond it? He that looks not on the end of his sufferings, as well as on the sufferings themselves, must needs lose the whole consolation: "And if he see not the peaceable fruits of

righteousness," which they afterwards yield, they cannot to him "be joyous, but grievous." This is the noble advantage of faith; it can look on the means and the end together. This also is the reason why we pity ourselves more than God pities us, though we love not ourselves so much as he loves us; and why we would have the cup to pass from us, when he will make us drink it up. We pity ourselves with an ignorant pity, and would be saved from the cross, which is the way to save us. God sees our glory as well as our suffering; and sees our suffering as it conduces to our glory: he sees at once our cross and our crown, and therefore, pities us the less, and will not let us have our wills. Believe me, brethren, this is the great reason of our mistakes, our impatience, our censuring of God, our sorrow at sickness and at death;—we gaze on the evil itself, but fix not our thoughts on what is beyond it. If we did but clearly see heaven, as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of his dealings would appear grievous. If thou canst but learn this way to heaven, and get thy soul acquainted there, thou needest not be unfurnished with the choicest cordials, to revive thy spirits under every affliction; thou knowest where to have them whenever thou needest them: thou mayest have arguments at hand to answer all that the devil or the flesh can say to thy discomfort. If thou wouldst end thy days in peace, and close thy dying eyes with comfort, die daily; live now in heaven; be much with Christ, and thy soul shall bless the day thou tookest this counsel.

VII. Consider that a heart set on heaven, makes a man profitable to all about him. When a man is in a strange land, how glad is he to meet with one of his own nation! how delightful is it to them to talk of their country, of their acquaintance, and of the affairs of their home! Now with a heavenly Christian thou mayest have such a discourse; for he has been there in the spirit, and can tell thee of the glory and rest above. O, how refreshing are his expressions; how his words pierce and melt the heart; how they transform the



hearers into other men, so that they think they are in heaven all the while ! How does his “doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass !” His feeling, sweet discourse of heaven, is like the box of precious ointment, which being poured on the head of Christ, filled the house with the odour of its perfume. All that are near may be refreshed by it. This is the companion who will watch over thy ways, who will strengthen thee when thou art weak, who will cheer thee when thou art disconsolate, who will comfort thee with the same comforts wherewith he himself has been so often comforted.

VIII. Consider that a heart set on heaven is honourable to God. No man so highly honours God, as he who has his conversation in heaven : and without this we deeply dishonour him. Is it not a dishonour to our Father in heaven, when we who call ourselves his children, feed on earth, and the garb of our souls is like that of the world, when we might have daily admittance into his presence chamber ? Surely we live not as becomes the children of a King, even of the great King of all the world ; we live not according to the height of our hopes, nor according to the plenty that is in the promises, nor according to the provision of our Father’s house, and the great preparations which he has made for his saints. But O, when a Christian lives above, and rejoices in the things that are unseen,—how does God take himself to be honoured by him ! “Them that honour me,” says God, “I will honour ; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

IX. If thou neglect this duty of keeping thy heart in heaven, thou disobeyest the express command of God, and dost lose the comfort of the sweet parts of Scripture, and frustrate the preparations he has made for thy joy.

1. Thou disobeyest the command of God. He has not left it as a thing indifferent, and at thy own choice, whether or not thou wilt have thy heart in heaven.

He has made it thy duty, as well as thy interest, that so a double bond may tie thee not to forsake thy own mercies. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." The same God that has commanded thee to believe, and to be a Christian, has commanded thee to set thy affections above. The same God that has forbidden thee to murder, to steal, to commit adultery, has forbidden thee to neglect this great duty. And darest thou disobey him? Why makest thou not conscience of the one duty, as well as of the other?

2. Thou lovest the comforts of the sweetest parts of Scripture. All those glorious descriptions of heaven, all those discoveries of our future blessedness, all God's revelations of his gracious purposes towards us, all his precious promises of rest, are lost to thee. Are not these the stars in the firmament of the Scripture, the golden lines in the book of God? Of all the Bible, methinks, thou shouldst not part with one of these promises, no, not for a world. As heaven is the perfection of all our mercies, so the promises of it in the gospel, are the very soul of the gospel. That word which was sweeter to David than the honey and the honey-comb, and to Jeremiah the joy and rejoicing of his heart,—the most pleasant part of this thou lovest.

3. Thou dost frustrate the preparations of Christ for thy joy, and makest him speak in vain. Is a comfortable word from the mouth of God of so great worth, that all the comforts of the world are nothing to it? And dost thou neglect and overlook so many of them? Why should God reveal so much of his counsel, and tell us beforehand of the joys we shall possess, but that he would have us know it for our joy? If it had not been to make our present life comfortable, and fill us with the delights of our future blessedness, he might have kept his purpose to himself, and never have let us know till we came to enjoy it, nor have revealed it to us till death discovered what he meant to do with us in the world to come; yea, when we had got pos-

session of our rest, he might still have concealed its eternity from us; and then the fears of losing it again would have bereaved us of much of the sweetness of our joys. But it has pleased our heavenly Father to open his counsel, to let us know the designs of his heart, to acquaint us with the eternal extent of his love; and all this that our "joy may be full," and we may live as the heirs of such a kingdom; and shall we now overlook all, as if he had revealed no such matter? Shall we live in earthly cares and sorrows, as if we knew of no such blessedness? O that our hearts were as high as our hopes, and our hopes as high as these infallible promises!

X. Consider it is but just that our hearts should be on God, when the heart of God is so much on us. If the Lord of glory can stoop so low, as to set his heart on sinful dust, surely one would think we should be easily persuaded to raise our hearts on high to Christ and glory, to ascend to him in our daily affections, who condescends to us. Oh! if God delighted no more in us, than we in him, what would we do! In what a deplorable case would we be! Christian, dost thou not perceive that the heart of God is set upon thee, and that he remembers thee with tender love, even when thou forgettest both thyself and him? Dost thou not find him following thee with daily mercies, moving upon thy soul, providing for thy body, and preserving both? Does he not bear thee continually in the arms of love, and give his angels charge over thee, and promise "that all things shall work together for thy good?" And canst thou find in thy heart, to be taken up with earthly toys, and to forget thy Lord, who forgets not thee? When he speaks of his own regards to us, hear what he says:—"But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee: Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." But when he speaks of our

regards to him, how different are his words! "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number." Ah! vile ingratitude. Is not this the sin which Isaiah so solemnly calls both heaven and earth to witness against? "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." O brethren give not God cause to expostulate thus with you; but rather admire his minding of you, and let this draw your mind again to him, and say as Job, "What is man that thou shouldst magnify him, and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him, and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" Let thy soul ascend to God, and visit him every morning, and let thy heart be towards him every moment.

XI. Consider, should not our interest in heaven, and our relation to it, continually keep our hearts upon it? Why, there our Father keeps his court; and accordingly in our prayers we call him "Our Father which art in heaven." Ah! ungracious children, that can be so taken up with things here below, as to be unmindful of such a Father! There too is Christ our head, our husband, our life; and shall we not look towards him, till we come and see him face to face? There are multitudes of our elder brethren, many of them our friends and our ancient acquaintance, whose society in the flesh we so much delighted in, and whose departure hence we so much lamented. And is this no attraction to thy thoughts? If they were within thy reach on earth, thou wouldst go and visit them, and why wilt thou not oftener visit them in spirit, and rejoice to think of thy meeting them there again? "Socrates rejoiced," said Bullinger, "that he should die, because he believed he would see Homer, and Hesiod, and other illustrious men; how much more do I rejoice, who am sure to see Christ my Saviour, the eternal son of God, in his assumed flesh; and, likewise, so many holy and excellent men, the

patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs." Moreover, our house and home is above; for "we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Why then do we look no oftener towards it, and groan not more earnestly, "desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven?" We are strangers here, and that is our country: we are heirs, and that is our inheritance, even "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." We are here in continual distress and want, and there lies our substance, even that "better and more enduring substance." Yea, the very hope of our souls is there; all our hope of relief from our distresses; all our hope of happiness; all this hope is laid up for us in heaven. Why, beloved Christians, have we so much interest, and yet so few thoughts there? Why have we so near relation, and so little affection? Does it become us to be delighted with the company of strangers, so as to forget our Father, and our Lord? or to be so well pleased with those that hate and grieve us, as to forget our best and dearest friends? or to be so enraptured with toys and trifles, as to forget our inheritance and our treasure? O, that we could mind our own inheritance, and value it but half as much as it deserves!

Lastly, Consider there is nothing else worth setting our hearts upon. If God have them not, who or what shall have them? If thou mind not thy everlasting rest, what wilt thou mind? Hast thou found out some other God, or heaven? or something that will serve thee instead of rest? Hast thou found on earth an eternal happiness? Ah sinner! trust not to thy discoveries; boast not of thy gain, till experience bid thee boast, or rather take up with the experience of thy forefathers, who are now in the dust, and who found that all on earth was vanity and vexation of spirit. I would advise thee not to make experiments at so dear a rate, as all those do that seek after happiness, here below; lest, when the substance is lost, thou

find, when it is too late, that thou didst catch but a shadow. I would wish thee not to trouble thyself in looking for that which is not on earth, lest thou learn thy experience with the loss of thy soul, which thou mightest have learned on easier terms, even by the warnings of God in his word, and by the loss of thousands of souls before thee.

Thus I have given thee various arguments to consider of, and if it may be, to persuade thee to an heavenly life. I now entreat thee to review them. Read them deliberately, and read them again, and then tell me, Are they reason or are they not? Are these considerations weighty, or are they not? Are these arguments convincing, or are they not? Have I proved it thy duty, and of absolute necessity, to keep thy heart on things above, or have I not? I have now a few plain directions to give you, to help you in performing this great work; but alas! it is in vain to mention them, unless you be willing to put them in practice. What sayest thou, reader? Art thou willing, or art thou not? Wilt thou obey, if I show thee the way of thy duty? However, I will set them down, and offer them to thee, and may the Lord persuade thy heart to the work!



## CHAPTER II.

### HINDERANCES TO HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS.

THE first exhortation which I must here give thee is to avoid some dangerous hinderances which otherwise will keep thee from this work, as they have done many thousand souls before thee. If I show thee briefly where the rocks and gulfs lie; if I erect a mark over every quicksand, I hope thou wilt beware of them. As, therefore, thou valuest the comforts of a heavenly life, I here charge thee before God to avoid most carefully the following impediments.

I. Beware of living in known unmortified sin. O what havoc will this make in thy soul ! O, the joys that it has destroyed, the blessed communion with God, that it has interrupted ! the ruins that it has made amongst men's graces ! but, above all others, it is especially an enemy to this great duty.

O Christian, I desire thee in the fear of God, stay here a little, and search thy heart. Art thou one that has used violence with thy conscience ? Art thou a wilful neglecter of known duties, either public, private, or secret ? Art thou a slave to thine appetite, in eating or drinking, or to any other commanding sense ? Art thou a proud seeker of esteem and honour, a man that must needs have other men's good opinion ? Art thou a peevish and passionate person, ready to take fire at every word, or look, or every supposed slighting of thee, or every neglect of compliment or courtesy ? Art thou a knowing deceiver of others in thy dealings ? Or one that has set thyself to rise in the world, be the means what they may ? If this be thy case, I dare say heaven and thy soul are great strangers : I dare say thou art seldom in heart with God, and there is little hope it will ever be better with thee, as long as thou continuest in these transgressions. Every wilful sin that thou livest in, will be to thy comforts as water to the fire. When thou thiukest to quicken them, this will quench them ; when thy heart begins to draw near to God, this will fill thee with doubting, and cover thee with shame. Besides sin utterly indisposes and disables thee for this work. When thou shouldst wind up thy heart to heaven, alas, it is biased another way ; it is entangled in the lusts of the flesh, and can no more ascend in divine meditation, than the bird can fly whose wings are clipped, or that is entangled in the snare. If heaven and hell can meet together, and if God can become a lover of sin, then mayst thou live in thy sin, and yet taste of glory, and have a conversation in heaven, though thou cherish thy corruption. If, therefore, thou find thyself guilty, never doubt but that this is the cause which estranges thee from heaven ; and

take heed lest it at last keep out thyself, as it now keeps out thy heart.

Resolve then to keep from the occasions of sin, and, as much as possible, out of the way of temptation. The strongest Christian is unsafe among occasions of sin. O what need have we to pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil? And shall we pray against occasions of sin, and yet cast ourselves upon them? Christ thought it not unnecessary to say to his disciples, "Remember Lot's wife;" "What I say to one, I say unto all, Watch."

II. Beware of earthly-mindedness. You may easily conceive, that this cannot consist with a heavenly mind. God and mammon, earth and heaven, cannot both have possession of thy heart. If thou be a man that hast fancied to thyself, some content or happiness to be found on earth, and beginnest to taste a sweetness in gain, and to aspire after a fuller and higher estate, believe me, thou art marching with thy back upon Christ, and art posting apace from this heavenly life. Why, the world has that from thee, which God has from the heavenly Christian. When he is blessing himself in his God, and rejoicing in hope of the glory to come, thou art blessing thyself in thy prosperity, and rejoicing in hope of thy thriving on earth. When he is solacing his soul with the views of Christ, of the angels and the saints with whom he shall live for ever, thou art comforting thyself in looking at thy bills and bonds, thy money, thy goods, thy cattle, thy buildings, thy lands; in thinking of the favour of some great ones of the earth, of the pleasure of a plentiful estate, of a larger provision for thy children, and of the advancement of thy family. Dost thou not delight and please thyself with daily rolling these thoughts in thy mind, when a gracious soul should have higher delights? If Christ pronounced him a fool that said, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years," how much more so art thou, who knowing this, yet takest not warning, but in thy heart speakest the same words! Look them over seriously, and tell me what difference there is between



this fool's expressions and thy affections. I doubt not but thou hast more sense than to speak thy mind just in his language, but remember thou hast to do with the searcher of hearts. It may be thou holdest on in thy course of duty, and prayest as oft as thou didst before, and keepest in with good ministers, and with godly men, and seemest as forward in religion as ever. But what is all this to the purpose? Mock not thy soul, for God will not be so inocked. What good may yet remain in thee. I know not; but sure I am, thy course is dangerous, and, if thou follow it on, will end in sorrow. O Christian, who hast tasted of the pleasures of a heavenly life, I advise thee, as thou valuest their enjoyment, as ever thou wouldst taste of them any more, take heed of this gulf of an earthly mind; for if once thou come to this, that thou *will* be rich, thou wilt "fall into temptation and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition." Keep the things of the world as thy upper garments, loose about thee, that thou mayest lay them aside, whenever there is cause; but let God and glory be next thy heart, yea, as the very blood and spirit by which thou livest. Let these solemn warnings be engraven on thy heart: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

III. Beware of the company of ungodly men. Not that I would dissuade thee from necessary intercourse with them, or from doing them any office of love; especially not from endeavouring the good of their souls, as long as thou hast any opportunity or hope; but it is the unnecessary society of ungodly men, and too much familiarity with unprofitable companions, though they be not so apparently ungodly, that I dissuade you from. There are many persons whom we may not avoid, or excommunicate out of the church, nor out of our private society, whom yet we must exclude from too much familiarity with us, by way of pru-

dence, for the preservation of ourselves. It is not only the openly profane, the swearer, the drunkard, and the enemies of godliness, that will prove hurtful companions to us, though these indeed are to be particularly avoided; but too frequent society with dead-hearted formalists, or persons merely civil and moral, may much divert our thoughts from heaven, and do ourselves a great deal of harm. As mere idleness and forgetfulness of God, will keep a soul as certainly from heaven, as a profane, licentious, fleshly life; so also will the useless company of such negligent forgetful persons as surely keep our hearts from heaven, as the company of men more dissolute and profane. Nay, if thou hadst newly been warming thy heart in the contemplation of the blessed joys above, would not their discourse benumb thine affections, and quickly freeze thy heart again? I appeal to the judgment of any man that has tried it, and made observations on the frame of his spirit. Men cannot well talk of one thing, and mind another, especially things of such different natures. In a word, our company will be part of our happiness in heaven, and it is a singular part of our furtherance to it, or hinderance from it. We are usually like the society with which we most converse. He that never found it hard to have a heavenly mind in earthly company, must certainly never have tried the experiment.

IV. As you value the comforts of a heavenly life, beware of a proud and lofty spirit. There is such an antipathy between this sin and God, that thou wilt never get thy heart near him, nor get him near thy heart, as long as this prevails in it. If pride cast the angels out of heaven that were in it, it must needs keep thy heart estranged from it. If it cast our first parents out of paradise, and brought the curse of God on all the creatures here below, it must needs keep our hearts from paradise, and increase our separation from God. Believe it, brethren, a proud heart and a heavenly heart are exceedingly contrary to each other. Intercourse with God will keep men low; and that lowliness will further their intercourse. When a man

is accustomed to be much with God, and is taken up in the study of his glorious attributes, he abhors himself in dust and ashes; and that self-abhorrence is his best preparative to obtain admittance to God again. The delight of God is an humble soul, even he that is contrite, and that trembles at his word; and the delight of an humble soul is in God: and surely, where there is this mutual delight, there will be the freest access, and heartiest welcome, and most frequent converse. Heaven could not hold God and the proud angels together, but an humble soul he makes his dwelling: and surely if our dwelling be with him, and his dwelling also be with us, there must needs be a most near and sweet familiarity. But the soul that is proud cannot plead this privilege. God is so far from dwelling with it, that he will not admit it to any near access, but looks upon it afar off. "He resisteth the proud; but he giveth grace to the humble." Well, then, art thou a man of worth in thine own eyes, and very tender of thine esteem with others? Art thou one that much valueth the applause of the people, and feelest elated when thou hearest of thy great esteem with men, and much dejected when thou findest that they slight thee? Dost thou love those best who highly honour thee; and does thy heart bear a grudge at those that thou thinkest do undervalue thee, though they be otherwise men of godliness and honesty? Art thou one that must needs have thy humours fulfilled, and thy judgments a rule to the judgments of others, and thy word a law to all about thee? Art thou ready to quarrel with every man that lets fall a word derogatory to thy honour? Art thou one that honourest the godly that are rich, and thinkest thyself somebody if they value and own thee, but lookest strangely at the godly poor, and art almost ashamed to be their companion? Art thou one that canst not serve God in a low place as well as in a high; and thinkest thyself the fittest for offices and honours; and lovest God's service when it consists with preferment? Hast thou thine eye and thy speech much on thy own deservings? And are thy

boastings restrained more by prudence than by humility? Dost thou delight in opportunities of exhibiting thy talents, and lovest to have thy name made public to the world, and wouldst fain leave behind thee some monument of thy worth, that posterity may admire thee when thou art dead and gone? Dost thou employ artful circumlocutions to commend thyself, while thou seemest to abase thyself, and deny thy worth? Art thou readier to defend thyself and maintain thine innocency, than to accuse thyself, or confess thy fault? Canst thou hardly bear a close reproof, and dost thou digest plain dealing with difficulty and distaste? Art thou readier in thy discourse to teach than to learn; to dictate to others, than to hearken to their instructions? Art thou bold and confident in thy own opinions, and little suspicious of the weakness of thy understanding, but a slighter of the judgment of all that are against thee? Is thy spirit more disposed to command and govern, than it is to obey and be ruled by others? Art thou ready to censure the doctrine of thy teachers, and to think, if thou wert a minister, thou wouldst be more abundant and more faithful in thy labours? If these symptoms be undeniably in thy heart, beyond doubt thou art a proud person. And can this man possibly have his heart in heaven? It is possible his invention and memory may furnish his tongue both with humble and heavenly expressions, but in his spirit there is no more of heaven than there is of humility.

Brethren, I intreat you to be very jealous of your souls in this point. There is nothing in the world which will more estrange you from God. O Christian, if thou wouldst live continually in the presence of thy Lord, lie in the dust, and he will thence raise thee up. Learn of him to be meek and lowly, and then thou shalt taste of this rest to thy soul. Thy soul else will be "as the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Instead of sweet delight in God, thy pride will fill thee with perpetual disquietness. As he that "humbleth himself as a little child," shall hereafter "be greatest in the king-

dom of heaven," so shall he now be greatest in the foretastes of that kingdom; for as "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased," so "he that humbleth himself shall," in both these respects, "be exalted."

VI. Beware of slothfulness of spirit. Oh! if it were only the exercise of the body, the moving of the lips the bending of the knee; then it were an easy work indeed, and men would as commonly step to heaven, as they go a few miles to visit a friend. Yea, if it were to spend most of our days in numbering beads, and repeating certain words and prayers, "in a voluntary humility, and neglecting of the body, after the commandments and doctrines of men," it were comparatively easy. Or if it consisted in the outward performance of duties commanded by God, or in the exercise of talents and gifts, though we made such performance our daily trade, it were easy to be heavenly-minded. But it is a work more difficult than any or all of these. To separate our thoughts and affections from the world, to force them to a work of so high a nature, to draw forth all our graces in their order, and to exercise each on its proper object, to hold them to this, till they perceive success, and till the work thrives and prospers in their hands,—this, this is a difficult task. Christian, heaven is above thee, and the way is upward. Dost thou, who art a feeble, unholy creature, think to travel daily this steep ascent, without much labour and resolution? Canst thou get that earthly heart to heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while thou liest still, and takest thine ease? If lying down at the foot of the hill, and looking toward the top, and wishing we were there, would serve the turn, then we would have daily travellers to heaven. But "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be violence used to get the first-fruits, as well as to get the full possession. Dost thou not feel it so, though I should not tell thee? Dost thou find it easy to dwell on the delights above? It is true, the work is exceedingly sweet; there is no condition on earth so desirable; but therefore it is

that our hearts are so backward, especially in the beginning, till we are acquainted with it. O how many hundred professors of religion are there, who can easily bring their hearts to ordinary duties, as reading, hearing, praying, who could never yet, in all their lives, bring them and keep them to a heavenly contemplation one half hour together! Consider here, reader, as before the Lord, whether this be not thine own case. Thou knowest that heaven is thy only hope; thou knowest, that a heart seldom thinking of heaven, can fetch but little comfort thence; and dost thou yet, notwithstanding all this, let slip thy opportunities, and grovel below in mere duties, when thou shouldst walk above, and live with God? Dost thou commend the sweetness of a heavenly life, and judge those the most excellent Christians that use it,—and yet dost thou never once try it thyself? How many hundreds read books, and hear sermons, in expectation of hearing of some easy course, or of meeting with a shorter way to comfort than they are ever likely to find in this world! And if they can hear of none from the preachers of truth, they will snatch it with rejoicing from the teachers of falsehood.

There are also a multitude of professors who come and inquire for marks and signs,—“How shall I know whether my heart be sincere?” and they think the bare naming of some marks is enough to discover them; but they never employ one hour in trying themselves by the marks they hear. So here they ask for directions for a heavenly life; and if the hearing and knowing of these directions would serve, they would be heavenly Christians. But if we set them to task, and show them their work, and tell them they cannot have these delights on easier terms,—then they leave us, as the young man left Christ with sorrow. My advice to such a lazy professor is this: As you are convinced that this work is necessary to thy comfortable living, set about it resolvedly. If thy heart draw back, and be indisposed, force it on with the command of reason; and if thy reason begin to dispute the duty, produce the command of God; and urge it forward by

the consideration of thy necessity, and the other motives before propounded. Let not such an incomparable treasure lie before thee, while thou liest still with thy hand in thy bosom. Let not thy life be a continual vexation, while it might be a continual feast. When thou hast once tasted of the sweetness of the duty, and a little accustomed thy heart to it, thou wilt find the pains thou takest with thy backward flesh abundantly recompensed in the pleasures of thy spirit.

As I have seldom known Christians perplexed with doubts about their state, for want of knowing right evidences by which to try themselves, so much as for want of skill and diligence in using them, so have I seldom known a Christian that wants the joys of this heavenly life, for want of knowing the means to get it, but for want of a heart to set about the work, and painfully to use the means they know. It is "the field of the slothful" that is "overgrown with thorns;" and "the desire of the slothful killeth" his joys, because "his hands refuse to labour." While he lies wishing, his soul lies starving. He says "There is a lion in the way, there is a lion in the streets, and turneth himself on his bed as a door turneth on the hinges: He hideth his hand in his bosom, and it grieveth him to bring it to his mouth," though it be to feed himself with the bread of life. What is this but despising the feast prepared, and setting light by the dear bought pleasures, and consequently, by the precious blood that purchased them, and throwing away our own consolations? The Holy Spirit has told us, that "he that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." Apply this to thy spiritual work, and study well the meaning of it.

VII. Beware of contenting yourselves with the mere preparatives to this heavenly life, while you are utter strangers to the life itself. It is a most dangerous thing to take up with the mere study of heavenly things, and the notions and thoughts of them in our understanding, or the talking of them with one another, as if this were all that is necessary to make us heavenly people. There are none in more danger of this snare,

than those who are much in public duty, especially ministers of the Gospel. O how easily may they be deceived, while they do nothing more than read of heaven, and study of heaven, and preach of heaven, and pray and talk of heaven! What, is not this a heavenly life! O that God would reveal to our hearts the danger of this snare. Alas! all this is but mere preparation. This is not the life we speak of, though it is indeed, a very useful help thereto. I entreat every one of my brethren in the ministry, that they search and watch against this temptation. Alas! this is but gathering the materials, not erecting the building; this is but gathering the manna for others, not eating and digesting it ourselves. As he that sits at home may study geography, and give very exact descriptions of countries, which yet he never saw nor travelled to; so may you describe to others the joys of heaven, and yet never partake of them yourselves. As a blind man may dispute of light and colours, so may you set forth to others that heavenly light, where-with your own souls were never enlightened, and bring that fire for the hearts of your people, that never once warmed your own hearts. If you should study of nothing but heaven while you lived, and preach of nothing but heaven to your people, yet might your own hearts be strangers to it. What heavenly passages had Balaam in his prophecies, yet was there little of it in his spirit. Nay, we are under a more subtle temptation than any other men, to draw us from this heavenly life. If our employments were at a greater distance from heaven, and took up our thoughts about worldly things, we should not be so apt to be contented and deluded; but when we find ourselves employed upon nothing else, we are more easily drawn to take up with it. Studying and preaching of heaven more resembles an heavenly life, than thinking and talking of the world, and the resemblance is apt to deceive us. This is to die a most miserable death, even to famish ourselves, because we have bread on our tables, which is worse than to famish when we cannot get it: it is to die of thirst while we



draw water for others, thinking it enough that we have daily to do with it, though we never drink to the refreshment of our own souls.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### HELPS TO HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS.

HAVING thus shown thee the hinderances in thy way, I shall now lay before thee some general helps to a heavenly life. But first, I expect that thou wilt resolve against the hinderances now mentioned, and avoid them faithfully, or else thy labour will be all in vain. Thou dost but go about to reconcile light and darkness, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell in thy spirit, if thou do not this. I must tell thee also, that I expect thy promise, faithfully to use the helps which I shall offer to thee; and that the reading of them will not bring heaven into thy heart, but the constant practice of them will do it. It were better for thee I had never written them, and thou hadst never read them, if thou do not buckle on thy armour for this exercise. As then thou valuest the delights of these foretastes of heaven, make conscience of performing the following duties:

I. Impress thy heart with the consideration that heaven is the only treasure, and labour to know also what a treasure it is. If thou do not truly believe it to be the chief good, thou wilt never set thy heart upon it. This must not only be the conviction of thy understanding, but it must sink deep into thy affections; for if it be only a notion in thy head, it will never much influence thy heart. As long as your judgments undervalue it, your affections must needs be cold towards it. If your judgment prefer the delights of the flesh before the delights in the presence of God, it is impossible that your hearts should be in heaven. As it is ignorance of the emptiness of things

below that makes men so overvalue them; so it is ignorance of the high delights above, which is the cause that men so little mind them.

II. Labour to know heaven not merely as the only happiness, but as thy own happiness. Though the knowledge of excellency and suitableness may excite that love which works by desire; yet there must be the knowledge of our interest in it, to produce our love of complacency. We may confess heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the acquisition of it to be but probable and hopeful: but we can never delightfully rejoice in it, till we are somewhat persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that is naked, to see the rich attire of others; or to a man that is hungry, to see a feast of which he must not taste? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? So, for a man to know the excellencies of heaven, and not to know whether he shall ever enjoy them, may well excite desire, but it will raise but little joy in his bosom. O therefore, Christians, rest not till you can call this rest your own. Sit not down without assurance. Get alone, and bring thy heart to the bar of trial; force it to answer the interrogatories put to it; set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and the qualifications of thy soul on the other side, and then judge what resemblance there is between them. Thou hast the same word before thee, by which to judge thyself now, as thou shalt be judged by at the great day. Thou mayest there read the very articles upon which thou shalt be tried; try thyself by these articles now. Thou mayest there know beforehand on what terms men shall then be acquitted or condemned. Try now whether thou art possessed of that which will acquit thee, or whether thou be in the condition of those that will be condemned; and accordingly acquit or condemn thyself. Yet be sure thou judge by a true touchstone, and mistake not the Scripture description of a saint, that thou neither acquit nor condemn thyself by mistake;

for as groundless hopes tend to confusion, and are the greatest cause of most men's damnation, so groundless doubtings tend to perplexity, and are a great cause of the disquiet of the saints. Lay, therefore, thy grounds of trial safely and advisedly; proceed in the work deliberately and methodically; follow it to an issue resolutely and perseveringly. Suffer not thy heart to give thee the slip, and get away before a judgment is passed; but make it stay to hear its sentence. If once, or twice, or thrice will not do it, if a few days of hearing bring not the cause to an issue, follow it on with unwearied diligence; give not over till the work be done, and till thou canst say either thou art, or art not a member of Christ, either that thou hast, or that thou hast not yet a title to this rest. Be sure thou rest not in wilful uncertainties. O if men truly knew that God is their own Father, and Christ their own Redeemer, and heaven their own everlasting habitation, how could they choose but be delighted with the forethoughts of it? Well, then, this is my advice to thee, that thou follow on the work of self-examination, till thou hast got assurance that this rest is thy own. This will draw thy heart unto it; and feed thy spirit with fresh delights, which else will be but tormented so much the more, to think that there is such rest for others, but none for thee.

III. Labour to apprehend how near thy rest is. Think seriously of its speedy approach. That which we think is near at hand, we are more sensible of, than that which we behold at a distance. When we hear of war or famine in another country, or in a distant age, it troubles us not; so, if we hear of peace and plenty a great way off, or of a golden age that shall fall out, nobody knows when, it scarcely rejoices us. But if judgments or mercies begin to draw near, then they affect us. If we were sure we should see the golden age, then it would rejoice us. When the plague is in a town but twenty miles off, we do not fear it; nor much, perhaps, if it be in another street; but if once it come to the next door, or if it seize on one in our own family, then we begin to think on it

more feelingly. When judgments or mercies are afar off, we talk of them as marvels; but when they draw near to us, we look on them as truths. This makes men think on heaven so insensibly, because they conceive of it at too great a distance. They look on it as twenty, or thirty, or forty years of; and this it is that dulls their sense. As wicked men are fearless and senseless of judgment, "because sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed;" so are the godly cheated of their comforts, by supposing them further off than they are. This is the danger of putting the day of death far from us. When men promise themselves longer time in the world than God has promised them, and judge of the length of their lives by the probabilities they gather from their age, their health, their constitution, this makes them look at heaven as a great way off. If the rich fool in the gospel had not expected to live many years, he would surely have thought more of providing for eternity, and less of his present stores and possessions; and if we did not think of staying many years out of heaven, we would think on it with far more joyful thoughts than we usually do. This expectation of long life does both the wicked and the godly inconceivable harm. How much better were it "to receive the sentence of death in ourselves," and to look on eternity as near at hand! Surely, reader, thou now standest at the door, and hundreds of diseases are ready waiting to open the door and let thee in. Have not the thirty or forty years of thy life that are past been quickly gone? Are they not a very little time when thou lookest back on them? And will not all the rest be shortly so too? Dost thou not feel that building of flesh shake, and perceive thy house of clay totter? Look on thy hour-glass, see how it runs: look on thy watch, how fast time flies. What a short moment is between us and our rest; what a small step is it from hence to eternity! While I am thinking and writing of it, it hastens near, and I am even entering into it, before I am aware. While thou art reading this, it approaches, and thy life will be gone "as a tale

that is told." Mayest thou not easily foresee thy dying time, and look upon thyself as ready to depart? If you verily believed you would die to-morrow, how seriously would you think of heaven to-night! The condemned prisoner knew before that he must die; but when he hears the sentence, and knows he has not a week to live, then how does his heart sink within him! The apprehension of the nearness of eternity makes men's thoughts of it quick and piercing, and puts life into their fears and sorrows, if they are unprepared for it; and into their desires and joys, if they have assurance of its glory.

IV. Be much in serious conversation concerning your rest, especially with those that can speak of it from their hearts, and are themselves imbued with a heavenly nature. It is a pity that Christians should ever meet together without some talk of their meeting in heaven, or of the way to it before they part. It is a pity so much precious time should be spent by Christians in vain discourse, foolish janglings, and useless disputes, without one word of heaven among them. Methinks we should meet together on purpose to warm our spirits, by discoursing of our rest. To hear a minister or a private Christian set forth that blessed glorious state, with power and life, from the promises of the gospel, methinks should make us say, as the two disciples, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the Scripture," while he opened to us the windows of heaven? Get then together, fellow Christians, and talk of the affairs of your country and kingdom, and comfort one another with such words. If worldlings when they get together will be talking of the world, should not Christians delight themselves in talking of Christ, and the heirs of heaven in talking of their inheritance?

V. Labour in every duty to raise thy affections nearer to heaven. A man's attainments and receivings from God are correspondent to his own desires and ends; that which he sincerely seeks, he finds. God's end in the institution of his ordinances was, that they may be as so many stepping stones to our rest, and as

the stairs by which, in subordination to Christ, we may daily ascend to it in our affections. Let this be thy end in using them, as it was God's end in ordaining them, and doubtless they will not be unsuccessful. Though men be personally far asunder, yet they may, even by letters, have a great deal of intercourse. How have we been rejoiced by a few lines from a friend, though we could not see him face to face! And may we not have intercourse with God in his ordinances, though our persons are yet so far remote? May not your spirits rejoice in reading those lines, which contain our legacy and charter for heaven? With what gladness may we read the expressions of divine love, and hear of the state of the celestial country! With what triumph and shoutings may we applaud our inheritance, though we have not yet the happiness to behold it!

VI. Improve every object thou seest, and every event of Divine Providence, to remind thy soul of its approaching rest. As all creatures and providences are means to our rest, so they point us to that as their end. God's sweetest dealings with us at present, would not be half so sweet as they are, if they had no relation to eternity. Thou takest but the bare earnest, and overlookest the main sum, when thou receivest thy mercies, and forgettest thy crown. O that Christians were more skilled in this heavenly art! You open your bibles, and read there of God and of glory. O learn also to open the creatures, and to open the events of Providence, to read of God and glory there. If thou prosper in the world, let this make thee more sensible of thy everlasting prosperity. If thou be weary of thy labours, let this make thy thoughts of rest more sweet. If things go adversely with thee in the world, let this make thee desire more earnestly that place where all thy sorrows and sufferings shall cease. Is thy body refreshed with food or sleep? Remember how thou shalt be refreshed with the fruits of the tree of life, which grows in the midst of the paradise of God; and with the water of life, which flows from before his throne. Art thou delight-

ing thyself in the society of thy friends? Remember the everlasting delight thou shalt have in the society of "the spirits of just men made perfect." Dost thou hear the raging noise of the wicked, the confusions of the world, and the tempest of wars? Why, think of the blessed agreement in heaven, of the melodious harmony of saints and angels, where there is nothing but love and union, and where we shall for ever solace ourselves in perfect peace, under the wings of the Prince of peace. Thus you see what advantages to an heavenly life every creature and condition affords us, if we had but hearts to apprehend and improve them.

VII. Be much in the angelical work of praise. As the most heavenly spirits will have the most heavenly employment, so the more heavenly the employment, the more will it make the spirit heavenly. Hence the work of praising God, being the most heavenly work, is likely to raise us to the most heavenly temper. This is the work of the saints and angels in heaven, and this will be our own everlasting work. Preaching, and prayer, and sacraments shall cease in heaven, but praise, and thanksgiving, and triumphant expressions of love and joy shall abide for ever. "The liveliest emblem of heaven that I know upon earth is, when the people of God, in the deep sense of his excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together, both with heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of his praises."

Little do we know how much we wrong ourselves by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God, or allowing them so narrow a place as we usually do, while we are copious enough in our confessions and petitions. O Christian, I entreat thee remember this. Let praise have a larger place in thy duties. Keep ready at hand matter to feed thy praise, as well as matter for confession and petition. To this end, study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord, as often as thy own necessities and vileness. Study the mercies which thou hast received, or which are promised, as often as thou studiest the sins thou hast committed.

“Praise the Lord, for He is good; sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant.”

VIII. If thou wouldst have thy heart in heaven, keep thy soul possessed with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God. The Scripture tells us, that “God is love,” “that he delighteth not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he repent and live.” He testifieth his love in an especial manner to his chosen, and his full resolution to save them. Oh! if we could always think of God, as we do of a friend, —as of one that unfeignedly loves us, even more than we love ourselves; whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and who has therefore provided us an everlasting dwelling with himself, it would not then be so hard to have our heart ever with him. Nothing will more quicken our love to God, than the belief of his love to us. Get therefore exalted ideas of the love of God, and lay up all the experiences and discoveries of his love to thee; and then see if it will not further thy heavenly mindedness.

IX. Carefully observe the drawings of the Spirit, and fear to quench his motions, or to resist his workings. If ever thy soul get above this earth, and learn to live in heaven, the Spirit of God must be to thee as the chariot to Elijah, the living principle by which thou must move and ascend. O then grieve not thy guide, quench not thy life, knock not off thy chariot-wheels. If thou do, no wonder if thy soul be at a loss, and all stand still, or fall to the earth. You little think how much the life of all your graces, and the happiness of your souls, depend upon your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit. When he urges thee to secret prayer, and thou refuseth obedience; when he forbids thee any sin, and yet thou wilt practise it; when he tells thee the way in which thou shouldst go, and thou wilt not walk therein, no wonder if heaven and thy soul be strangers. If thou wilt not follow the Spirit while he would draw thee to Christ, and to thy duty, how should he lead thee to heaven, and bring thy heart into the presence of God? O what supernatural help,—what bold access shall that



soul find in its approaches to God, that is accustomed to obey the Spirit! But how backward, how dull, how strange will he be in these approaches, who has been accustomed to resist the Spirit that would have guided him! I beseech thee, Christian, learn well this lesson, and try this course; let the very thoughts of thy heart be at the Spirit's direction. Dost thou not sometimes feel a strong impulse to retire from the world, and to draw near to God? O do not thou disobey, but hoist up sail while thou mayest have this blessed gale. When the wind blows strongest, thou goest fastest, either backward or forward. The more we resist the Spirit, the deeper will it wound; the more we obey, the speedier will be our pace.

Lastly, Neglect not due care for the health of thy body, and for maintaining cheerfulness in thy spirits; but yet do not over pamper and please thy flesh. Learn how to carry thyself with prudence to thy body. It is a useful servant, if thou give it but its due. It is a cruel tyrant, if thou give it the mastery. When we consider how frequently men run into each of these extremes, and how few use their bodies aright, we cannot wonder if they be much hindered in their heavenly course. Most men are slaves to their sensual appetites, and can scarcely deny any thing to the flesh. Look to this specially, ye that are young and healthful. As you love your souls, remember that declaration of Paul, which was the means of Augustine's conversion,—“Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the desires thereof.” Some few hinder their heavenly joy, by over-rigorously denying the body what is necessary, and so making it unable to serve them. If they who abuse their bodies, and neglect their health, wronged the flesh only, the matter were small; but they wrong the soul also, as he that spoils the house wrongs the inhabitant. When the body is sick, the spirits will languish, and will move heavily in these heavenly meditations and joys. Yet where God denies this mercy, we may the better bear it, because he oft occasions our benefit by the denial.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE NATURE OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION.

THOUGH I hope what I have already said will be found useful, yet I have observed the maxim, that my principal end be last in execution, though it was first in my intention. All I have said is but a preparation to this.

The duty which I press so earnestly, I shall now describe more particularly ; for I suppose by this time the reader is ready to inquire, What is this work which is so highly extolled? Why, it is the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul by meditation on the everlasting rest. I will explain a little more fully the meaning of this description, that so the duty may appear plain.

I. The general title that I give this duty is meditation, taken in the larger and usual sense for cogitation on things spiritual, and so comprehending consideration and contemplation.

That meditation is a duty of God's appointment, not only in his written law, but also in nature itself, I never met with the man that would deny ; but that it is a duty constantly and conscientiously practised even by the godly, so far as my acquaintance extends, I must, with sorrow, deny. It is in words confessed to be a duty by all, but in their practice, it is denied by most. And I know not by what fatality it happens, that men who are very conscientious, as to most other duties, do as easily overslip this, as if they knew it not to be a duty at all. They that are troubled, if they omit but a sermon, a fast, a prayer in public or private, were yet never troubled that they have omitted meditation, perhaps all their life time to this very day ; though it be that duty by which all other duties are

improved, and by which the soul digests truths, and draws forth their strength for its nourishment and refreshing. What good therefore, these men are like to get by sermons or providences, who are unacquainted with, and unaccustomed to, this work of meditation, you may easily judge: and why so much preaching is lost among us, and professors can run from sermon to sermon, and are never weary of hearing or reading, and yet have such languishing starved souls, I know no greater cause than their neglect of meditation.

II. I call this exercise the acting of "all" the powers of the soul, to distinguish it from the ordinary meditation of students, which is usually the mere employment of the intellect. It is not a bare thinking that I mean, nor the mere exercise of invention or memory, but a business of a higher and more excellent nature. When truth is apprehended only as truth, this is but a tasteless apprehension; but when it is apprehended as good, as well as true, this is a delightful apprehension. As a man is not apt to live according to the truth he knows, unless it deeply affect him; so neither does he enjoy its sweetness, except speculation pass into affection. The understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore, cannot do the whole work. As God has made the different organs of the body to perform their several offices for the nourishment of his corporeal frame; so has he ordained the faculties of the soul to perform their several offices for the maintenance of his spiritual life. The understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and the will must receive them, and commend them to the affections. While truth is but a speculation swimming in the brain, the soul has not half received it, nor taken fast hold of it. Christ and heaven have various excellencies, and therefore, God has formed the soul with powers of various kinds for apprehending them, that so we may be capable of enjoying these various excellencies of Christ.

This is, therefore, the great task that I would set thee on, to get these truths from thy head into thy heart

that all the sermons which thou hast heard of heaven and all the views thou hast formed of the heavenly rest, may be turned into animated affection, and thou mayest feel them revive thee, and warm thee at thy heart, and mayest so think of heaven, as heaven should be thought of.

As the affections of sinners are set on the world, and fallen from God, as well as the understanding, so must the affections of men be reduced to God, and taken up with him, as well as the understanding: and as the whole soul was filled with sin before, so the whole must now be filled with God. As Paul said of knowledge, and gifts, and faith to remove mountains, If thou have all these but have not love, thou art but "as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal;" so I may say of the exercise of these, If in this work of meditation thou exercise knowledge, and gifts, and faith of miracles, but not love, and hope, and joy, thou doest nothing, thou playest the child, not the man, the part of sinners, not of saints: for unconverted persons may do so also. If thy meditations only fill thy note-book with notions and good sayings concerning God, but not thy heart with longings after him and delight in him, for ought I know, thy book is as much a Christian as thou.

III. I call this meditation "*set and solemn*," to distinguish it from that which is occasional and cursory. As there is prayer which is *solemn* when we set ourselves wholly to the duty, and prayer which is sudden and short, commonly called *ejaculatory*, when, in the midst of other business, we send up some brief request to God; so also there is meditation which is *solemn*, *i. e.* when we apply ourselves only to that work; and there is a meditation which is short and cursory, *i. e.* when in the midst of business we have some good thoughts of God and heavenly things. Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your ordinary labours, and to that which special occasions direct you to, yet these are not the chief things which I here intend; but that you would make it a constant standing duty, as you

do hearing, and praying, and reading the Scripture ;— that you would solemnly set yourselves about it, and make it for the time your whole work, and intermix other matters no more with it than you would do with prayer or other duties.

IV. This meditation has for its object “ everlasting rest,” or the blessed state of man in the enjoyment of God in heaven. Meditation has as many objects to work upon, as there are matters in the Scriptures,— as there are creatures in the whole creation,—and as there are particular events of Providence in the government of the world ; but the meditation that I now direct you to, is only of the end of all these, and of these as they refer to that end. I would not have you lay aside your other meditations ; but surely as heaven has the pre-eminence in perfection, so should it have the pre-eminence in our meditation. That which will make us most happy when we possess it, will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it ; especially when that meditation is a degree of possession, if it be such affecting meditation as I have now described.

You need not be troubled with the fears of the world, lest studying so much these high matters, should make you mad. If I had set you to meditate as much on sin and wrath, to study nothing but judgment and damnation, then you might justly fear such an issue. But it is heaven, not hell, that I would persuade you to walk in : it is joy, not sorrow that I would persuade you to exercise. It is no deformed object on which I urge you to look, but the ravishing glory of the saints, on the unspeakable excellencies of the God of glory, on the beams which stream from the face of him “ who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” And are these saddening and maddening thoughts ? Will it distract a man to think of his only happiness ? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy, or the captive to foresee deliverance, or the poor to think of approaching riches and honours ? Methinks it should be likelier to make a man mad, to think of living in a world of woe, to think of abiding in poverty and sickness, to think of

dwelling amidst the rage of wicked men, than to think of being with Christ in glory. Methinks, if we be not mad already, it should soon distract us, to hear the tempests and roaring waves, to see the billows, and rocks, and gulfs, and sands, than to think of arriving safe into the haven of rest. But "wisdom is justified of all her children." Knowledge has no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any, but those that either never knew it, or never used it. I fear more the neglect of men who profess to approve it, than the opposition or arguments of those who are against it. Truth loses more by loose friends, than by its sharpest enemies.

Having thus explained to you my definition of heavenly contemplation, I shall now briefly notice those acts of the soul in which it consists. These are chiefly three, Consideration,—Soliloquy,—Prayer.

I. CONSIDERATION.—The great instrument of this work is reasoning the case with yourselves,—or, as I have just styled it, consideration or meditation. I here suppose you to know the things to be considered, and therefore, shall wholly pass over that meditation of students which tends only to speculation or knowing. They are known truths that I persuade you to consider; for the grossly ignorant that know not the doctrine of everlasting life, are, for the present, incapable of this duty.

Let me here briefly notice the uses of Consideration, or what force it has for moving the affections, and for impressing things on the heart.

1. Consideration opens as it were the door between the head and the heart. The understanding having received truths, lays them up in the memory; and consideration conveys them from thence to the affections. There are few men of so weak understanding or memory, but they know and can remember that which would strangely work upon them, and make great alterations in their spirits, if they were not locked up in their brain, and if they could but convey them to the heart. Now, this is the great work of consideration.

2. Consideration presents to the affections those objects which are of most weight and interest. The most delectable object does not please him that sees it not; nor does the most joyful news affect him that never hears it. Now, consideration presents before us those objects that were absent, and brings them to the eye and ear of the soul. Are not Christ, and glory, think you, affecting objects? Would they not work wonders upon the soul, if they were but clearly discovered, and powerfully transport us, if our apprehension of them were in any degree correspondent to their worth? Now, it is by consideration that they are presented to us: this is the perspective glass of the Christian, by which he can see from earth to heaven.

3. Consideration presents things in the most affecting way, and presses them home with the most powerful arguments. Man is a rational creature, and apt to be moved by reasoning; especially when the reasons are evident and strong. Now, consideration is just reasoning the case with a man's own heart; and what a multitude of reasons, both clear and weighty, are always at hand to work upon the heart! When a believer would reason his heart to this heavenly work how many arguments offer themselves, from God, from Christ, from our former estate, from our present state, from promises, from earnest, from the evil we now suffer, from the good we enjoy, from heaven, from hell! Every thing offers itself to promote our joy. Now, meditation is but the reading over and repeating God's reasons to our hearts, and so disputing with ourselves by his arguments. And is not this likely to be a prevailing way? What powerful reasons does the prodigal plead with himself, why he should return to his father's house! Now, we surely have as many and strong reasons to plead with our affections, to persuade them to our Father's everlasting habitations. And by consideration it is that they must all be set to work.

4. Consideration invests reason with its just authority and prerogative. It helps to deliver it from its

captivity to the senses of the soul. When it is subject. When it is domineer. Now it rises from its sleep, till it break the bonds of It is easy and ordinary against serious, strong do more seldom offend.

*Lastly, Consideration* as long as it is necessary by a weaker motion stronger at the first not get a man heated may; so, though heaven will not rather heat, yet meditation lengthen our walk

Thus, you see, meditation has for effecting of which it is a primary

II. *SOLILOQUY.*—The instrument of this work is that which I have just explained with us through meditation, if it be not able to affect the heart, which is called Soliloquy, pleading the case with us, as in preaching to others, the success of doctrines and duties as the lively application and propounding the most pathetic pleading deeply affected with it, though he knew it, yet never must thou do in thy heart. Enter into it in the most moving with the most weighty soliloquy, or self-co-

nsideration and sets it again upon the throne. When reason is silent, it is usually subsleep, the senses or imagination consideration awakens our reason it rouse up itself as Sampson, and sensuality wherewith it is fettered. It is easy and ordinary to sin against knowledge; but long, continued consideration, men end.

Consideration can continue the employment necessary. That may be accomplished in continued, which will not by a attempt. To run a few steps will not, but walking an hour together a sudden occasional thought of meditation will raise our affections to any spiritual end. Consideration can continue our thoughts, and till our hearts grow warm.

That force consideration or meditation has for effecting this great elevation of the soul, is the primary instrument.

Though the first and chief instrument, that cogitation, or consideration, is, that cogitation, or consideration, explained, and which is to go along with us through the whole, yet, because mere cogitation, or consideration, pressed home, will not pierce and we must proceed to the next step, Soliloquy, and which is nothing but a conversation with our own souls. As in preaching, the simple propounding and explaining of doctrines and duties seldom finds so much success in application, so it is also in meditating on the truths to ourselves. The moving, or conversation with a sinner, will make him feel a common truth, which though he never before stirred him. Now, thus meditation, to quicken thy own serious debate with it; plead with us in moving and affecting language; urge it with weighty and powerful arguments. This inference, has been the practice of



holy men of God in all times. How David pleads with his soul against its dejections, and argues it into holy confidence and comfort, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The like you may see in the meditations of holy men of later times, as Augustine, Bernard, and others, so that this is no new path which I persuade you to tread, but that which saints have ever used in their meditations.

This soliloquy has its several parts, and its due method wherein it should be managed. The parts of it are according to the several affections of the soul, to the several necessities thereof, to the various arguments to be used, and to the different ways of arguing. As every good master and father of a family is a good preacher to his own family, so every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. Soliloquy is preaching to ourselves. Mark the most affecting heart-melting minister; observe his course both for matter and manner; set him as a pattern before thee for thy imitation; and the same way that he takes with the hearts of his people, do thou also take with thy own heart.

III. PRAYER.—In heavenly contemplation we must rise, from speaking to ourselves, to speak to God. Prayer is not such a stranger to this exercise but that ejaculatory requests may be intermixed with it, and that as a part of the duty. How often does David intermix these in his Psalms, sometimes pleading with his soul, and sometimes with God. This keeps the soul sensible of the divine presence; it tends also exceedingly to quicken and raise it: so that as God is the highest object of our thoughts, so our contemplation of him, and our speaking to him, and pleading with him, more elevate the soul, and excite the

affections, than any other part of meditation. Though while we but plead the case with ourselves, we may be careless and unaffected, yet when we turn our speech to God, it may strike us with solemn awe; and the holiness and majesty of him to whom we speak, may cause both the matter and the words to pierce the deeper. The men of God who have left their meditations on record for our view, have thus intermixed soliloquy and prayer; sometimes speaking to their own hearts, and sometimes turning their speech to God. And though this may seem an indifferent thing, yet I conceive it very suitable and necessary; it is, in fact, the highest step we can advance to in the work.

I may, however, here observe, meditation and speaking to ourselves should go before prayer, or speaking to God. Want of this makes prayer with most to have little more than the name of prayer, and makes men speak as lightly and as stupidly to the dreadful God, as if it were to one of their companions, and with far less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel, if he should appear to them, or even to a judge or prince, if they were speaking for their lives; and consequently their success and answers are often like their prayers. O! speaking to the God of heaven in prayer, is a weightier duty than most are aware of!



## CHAPTER V.

OF THE TIME AND PLACE FOR HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION, AND THE PREPARATION OF THE HEART UNTO IT.

HAVING thus explained to you the nature of this duty, I shall now proceed to direct you in the work. And here I suppose thee to be a man that will conscientiously avoid the hinderances, and use the helps before

mentioned, or else it is in vain to set thee a higher lesson, till though hast first learned that. If thou hast done so, I shall proceed to give thee a few directions.

First, concerning the time and season.

Secondly, concerning the place.

Thirdly, concerning the frame of thy spirit.

First, I am to advise thee concerning the time or season.

I. Have, as much as possible, a fixed and regular time for this duty.

Some there are who question the propriety of having stated times for holy duties, as being superstitious; but if thou suit thy time to the advantage of the work, and place no religion in the time itself, thou needest not fear lest this be superstition. As a workman will have a set place, in his shop, for each of his tools, or else, when he should use them, they may be to seek, so a Christian should have a set time for every ordinary duty, or else when he should practise it, it is ten to one but he will overlook it. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and defends it against many temptations to omission. God has stated none but the Sabbath himself, but he has left it to be determined by ourselves, according to every man's condition and circumstances, lest his law should prove a burden or a snare. Yet has he left us general rules, which, by the use of reason and Christian prudence, may help us to determine the fittest times for our various duties. Though God has not told you at what hour you shall rise in the morning, or at what hours you shall eat and drink, yet your own reason and experience will tell you that ordinarily you should observe a stated time. I advise thee, therefore, if it be in thy power, to have a stated time for this duty, and to be as regular in it, as in hearing or praying. Yet I know this will not prove every man's duty. Some, as most servants, have not themselves and their time at command, and therefore cannot set their hours; many, too, are so poor that the necessity of their families will not allow them this freedom. I do not think it the duty of such persons to leave their work at stated times, for this exercise,

no, not for prayer, or other acts of worship. No such duty is at all times a duty. When two duties come together, and cannot both be performed, it were then a sin to perform the less. Of two duties we must choose the greater, though of two sins we must choose neither. I think such persons had best be watchful, to redeem time as much as they can, and take their vacant opportunities as they fall, and especially to join meditation and prayer, as much as they can, with the very labours of their callings. There is no such enmity between labouring and meditating, or praying, but that both may conveniently be done together.

II. Let it be frequent as well as stated. How often it should be in each particular case, I cannot determine, because men's circumstances materially vary. But that, in general, it be frequent, the Scripture requires, when it speaks of meditating "all the day,"—meditating "in the night-watches,"—meditating "day and night." Circumstances of our condition may much vary the circumstances of our duties. It may be one man's duty to hear or pray oftener than another, and so it may be as to meditation. But for those that can conveniently do it, I advise that it be once a day at least. Though Scripture tells us not how often in a day we should eat or drink, yet prudence and experience will direct us twice or thrice a day, according to the necessities of our bodies. Those that think they should not tie themselves to order or number in their duties, but should only meditate or pray, when they find the Spirit moving them to it, go upon uncertain and unchristian grounds. I am sure, the Scripture calls us to frequency, and our necessity seconds the voice of Scripture; and if, through my own neglect, or resistance, the Spirit does not excite or quicken me, I dare not, therefore, disobey the Scripture, nor neglect the necessities of my own soul. I should suspect that spirit, which would turn my soul from constancy in duty. If the Spirit in Scripture bid me meditate or pray, I dare not forbear it. If I find not incitation to duty before, yet I may find assistance while I wait in the performance of it. I am afraid of laying my

corruptions upon the Spirit, or blaming the want of the Spirit's assistance, when I should blame the backwardness of my own heart; nor dare I make one corruption a plea for another; nor urge the inward rebellion of my nature, as a reason for the outward disobedience of my life.

There are three reasons, in particular, which should persuade to frequency in this meditation on heaven.

1. Seldom conversing with God will produce a distance between him and thy soul. The chief design of this duty is that thou mayest have fellowship with God therein: if therefore, thou engage but seldom in it, thou wilt remain a stranger to him still, and so miss the end of the work. O, when a man feels his need of God, and must seek help from him in a time of necessity, when nothing else can do him any good, you would little think what an encouragement it is to go to a God that we know, and are acquainted with. But especially when we come to die, and must immediately appear before God, how great will the difference then appear! What a joy will it be to think, "I am going to that place in which I daily conversed; to the place whence I drew such frequent delights; to that God whom I have so often met in my meditations. My heart has been in heaven before now, and tasted its sweetness; and if my eyes were so enlightened, and my mind so refreshed, when I but tasted of that sweetness, what will it be when I shall freely feed upon it?" On the other hand, what a terror will it be to think, "I must die and go, I know not whither; I must go from a place where I am acquainted, to a place where I have no acquaintance!" O brethren, it is an inexpressible horror to a dying man to be a stranger to God and heaven. I am persuaded there is no cause that so commonly makes death, even to godly men, unwelcome and uncomfortable. Therefore I persuade thee to frequency in this duty, that there be no estrangement between thy soul and God.

2. Seldomness in conversing with God will render thee unskilful in the work. How awkwardly do men

put their hands to a work to which they are unaccustomed ! The heart, which of itself is naturally backward to this duty, will contract a greater unwillingness through disuse ; whereas frequency will habituate thy heart to the exercise, and thou wilt better know how to practise it, and it will also become more easy and delightful.

3. By long intermissions, thou wilt lose that heart and life, which thou didst obtain in the duty. If in holy meditation thou get near to Christ, and warm thy heart with the fire of his love ; and if thou then turn away and come but seldom, thou wilt soon return to thy former coldness. I advise thee, therefore, to be engaged as often as possible in this soul elevating duty, lest when thou hast long rowed hard against the wind and tide, the boat should go further down the stream by thy intermission, than it was got up by all thy labour.

III. Choose the most seasonable time. All things are beautiful in their season. Unseasonableness may lose thee the fruit of thy labour. It may raise up disturbances and difficulties in the work ; yea it may turn a duty to a sin ; whereas the seasonableness of a duty makes it easy, removes impediments, emboldens us to the undertaking, and ripens its fruits.

The seasons of this duty are either ordinary or extraordinary.

1. The ordinary season for your daily performance of the duty cannot be particularly determined by man, otherwise God would have fixed it in his word. Men's circumstances and employments are so various that that may be a seasonable time to one, which is unseasonable to another. Every man is the meetest judge for himself. Only give me leave to offer you my observation, as to the time I have found fittest for myself, and that is, the evening, from sun setting to the twilight ; and this corresponds with the experience of a better and wiser man than myself, namely, Isaac, for it is said, that "he went out to meditate in the field at the eventide ;" and his experience I dare more boldly recommend unto you than my own.

2. The Lord's day is a time exceedingly seasonable for this exercise. When could we more seasonably contemplate our everlasting rest, than on that day of rest which typifies it to us? As it is a day appropriated to Divine worship and spiritual duties, methinks we should never exclude this duty, which is so eminently Divine and spiritual. What fitter time to converse with our Lord, than on that day which he has appropriated to such employment, and which is therefore called the Lord's day? What fitter day to ascend to heaven, than that on which our Lord arose from earth, and triumphed over death and hell, and took possession of heaven before us? The fittest temper for a true believer, is, to be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

There are two sorts of Christians whom I would entreat to take special notice of this.

(1.) Those who spend the Lord's day only in public worship; either through the neglect of this spiritual duty of meditation, or else by their overmuch attendance on the public exercises of religion, allowing no time to private duty. This is a very hurtful mistake to the soul.

(2.) Those that have time on the Lord's day for idleness, and vain discourse, and find the day longer than they know well how to spend. Were you but acquainted with this duty of contemplation, you would need no other recreation or pastime; you would think the longest day short enough, and be sorry that the night came on to shorten your pleasure.

Having thus mentioned the fittest seasons for the ordinary performance of this heavenly work, I shall now notice some special seasons for the extraordinary performance of this duty.

1. When God extraordinarily revives and assists thy spirit. When God enkindles thy spirit with fire from above, it is that it may mount aloft more freely. It is a choice part of a Christian's skill, to observe the temper of his own spirit, and how the Spirit of Christ doth move upon his soul. Without Christ we can do nothing: let us, therefore, be doing when he is doing

Ships make little progress without the wind or tide ; and therefore, it is necessary to embrace the opportunity when the wind blows, or the tide favours. Be sure thou watch the wind and tide, if thou wouldst nave a speedy voyage to heaven. When the Spirit finds thy heart in prison and in irons, and smites it, and bids thee, as the angel did Peter, "Arise quickly and follow me," be sure thou then arise and follow, and thou shalt find thy chains fall off, and thy prison doors open, and thou wilt be in heaven before thou art aware.

2. When thou art in perplexity, through sufferings, or fear, or care, or temptation. When should we take cordials but in times of fainting? When is it more seasonable to walk to heaven, than when we know not in what corner on earth to live with comfort? When should our thoughts converse above, but when they have nothing but grief to converse with below? Surely God sends thee thy afflictions for this very purpose. Happy art thou, poor man, if thou make this use of thy poverty. Happy thou that art sick, if thou so improve thy sickness! "In the multitude of my thoughts within me," says David, "thy comforts delight my soul:" as if he had said, "I have multitudes of saddening thoughts that crowd upon me, thoughts of my sins, thoughts of my foes, thoughts of my dangers, thoughts of my pains; yet in the midst of all this crowd, one serious thought of the comforts of thy love, and especially of everlasting life in glory, dispels the throng, and scatters my cares, and disperses the clouds that my troubles had raised, that they even revive and delight my soul." And Paul, when he had cast up his full accounts, gives this as the sum, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Study these words well, for every one of them is full of life. If these sayings of God were truly and deeply fixed in thy heart, and if thou couldst in thy sober meditation but draw out the comfort of this one Scripture, I dare affirm it would sweeten the bitterest cup, and in a manner



make thee forget thy trouble; yea, and cause thee rejoice in thy tribulation. I will add but one text more, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: For the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

3. When the messengers of God summon us to die, when either our gray hairs, or our languishing bodies, or similar forerunners of death, tell us that our change cannot be far distant. When should we more frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find that this is almost ended? Surely no men have greater need of supporting joys than dying men; and those joys must be drawn from our eternal joy. And as heavenly delights are sweetest when they are pure and unmixed, having no earthly delights combined with them, so the delights of dying Christians are often the sweetest that ever they had. Hence the saints have been generally observed to be most heavenly when they were nearest dying. As our Saviour increased in wisdom and knowledge, so did he also in their blessed expressions, and yet the last are still the sweetest. What a heavenly prayer, and what a heavenly advice, does he give his disciples when he is about to leave them! When he saw he must leave the world, and go to the Father, how does he wean them from worldly expectations! How does he remind them of the mansions in his Father's house, and of his coming again to convey them thither; and promise that they shall be with him to behold his glory! There is more worth in those four chapters, John xiv., xv., xvi., xvii., than in all the books in the world beside. In like manner, it is the general temper of the spirits of the saints, to be most heavenly when they are nearest to heaven. As thou art sick, and needest the choicest cordials, so here are choicer than the world affords: here is the food of

angels and glorified saints; here are all the joys that heaven doth yield, even the vision of God, the sight of Christ, and whatsoever the blessed there possess. This table is spread for thee to feed on in thy sickness; these dainties are offered thee by thy Redeemer; only put forth the hand of faith, and feed upon them, and rejoice and live. He saith to thee, as of old to Elijah, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." I counsel thee, therefore, that thou obey his voice, and arise and eat, and in the strength of that meat thou mayest walk till thou come to the mount of God. And as old Simeon, when he saw Christ in his infancy in the temple, so do thou behold him in his glory in the temple of the New Jerusalem, and take him in the arms of thy faith, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Having said so much concerning the time of this duty, I shall now proceed, *secondly*, to advise thee concerning the place. Though God is every where to be found by a faithful soul, yet some places are more convenient for a duty than others.

I. As this is a private duty, I would counsel thee to retire to some private place. Our spirits need to be freed from every hinderance, and require every help, in the work; and though the circumstances of place may to some seem small things, yet do they much conduce to our hinderance or our help. Christ himself thought it not vain to direct in this circumstance of private duty, Matt. vi. 4, 6, 18. If in private prayer we must shut our door upon us, that our Father may hear us in secret, so is it also requisite in meditation. How often did Christ himself depart to some mountain, or wilderness, or other solitary place! For occasional meditation, I give thee not this advice; but for the daily set and solemn duty, I advise thee to withdraw thyself from all society, even though it were the society of godly men, that thou mayest a while enjoy the society of Christ. When thy eyes are filled with the persons and actions of men, and thine ears with their discourse, it is hard to have thy thoughts and

affections free for this duty. Accustom yourselves, therefore, as Christ himself did, to go sometimes into a solitary place, that thou mayest be wholly disengaged for this great employment.

II. As thou shouldst retire to some private place, so I would advise thee to observe more particularly what place and posture best agrees with thy spirit; whether within doors or without; whether sitting still, or walking about. Isaac's example will direct us to the place and posture which, I believe, will best suit with most, at least it does with me. He walked forth "to meditate in the field in the eventide." And Christ's own example gives us the like direction. He was so used to a solitary garden, that even Judas, when he came to betray him, knew where to find him.

*Thirdly*, I shall counsel thee concerning the preparation of thy heart for this duty.

The success of the work depends much on the frame of thy heart. When man's heart had nothing in it that might grieve the Spirit, then was it the delightful habitation of its Maker. God did not quit his residence there, till man repelled him by unworthy provocation. There grew no strangeness, till the heart grew sinful, and too loathsome a dungeon for God to delight in. And were the soul reduced to its former innocency, God would quickly return to his former habitation; yea, so far as it is renewed and repaired by the Spirit, and purged of its lusts, and beautified with his image, God will yet acknowledge it as his own, and Christ will manifest himself unto it, and the Spirit will take up his residence in it as in a temple. For the most part, so far as the soul is qualified for conversing with God, so far it actually enjoys him. "Keep thy heart, therefore, with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

When thou settest about this duty, attend more particularly to the following counsels:—

I. Get thy heart as clear from the world as thou canst. Lay aside the thoughts of thy business, of thy troubles, of thy enjoyments, of every thing, in short, that may take up any room in thy soul. Get thy

heart as empty as thou possibly canst, that so it may be the more capable of being filled with God. It is a work, as I have said, that will require all the powers of thy soul, if they were a thousand times more capacious and active than they are, and therefore you have need to lay aside all other thoughts and affections while you are busied in this exercise.

Seeing, therefore, so much depends on the capacity and frame of thy heart how much thou shalt enjoy of God in this contemplation, be sure that all the room thou hast be empty, and if ever, seek him here with all thy soul. Say to all thy worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to his disciples, "Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder." Yea, as God did terrify the people with the threatenings of death, if any one should dare to come up the Mount when Moses was to receive the law from God, so do thou terrify thy own heart, and use violence against thy intruding thoughts, if they offer to accompany thee to the mount of contemplation. Or as the priests thrust Uzziah the king out of the temple when he presumed to burn incense, so do thou thrust these thoughts from the temple of thy heart. Yourselves may be welcome, but such followers are not.

II. Engage in this work with the greatest seriousness. Formality here is a killing sin. There is no trifling in holy things: God will be "sanctified of all them that draw nigh unto him." To help thee therefore to be serious when thou settest about this work, attend to these three directions.

1. Labour to have a deep apprehension of the presence of God, and the incomprehensible greatness of the majesty which thou approachest. If Rebecca veil her face at her approach to Isaac; if Esther must not draw near till the king hold forth the golden sceptre; if dust and worms must treat each other with such respect, think with what reverence thou shouldst approach thy Maker: Think thou art addressing thyself to him that made the worlds by the word of his mouth, that upholds the earth as in the palm of his hand, that keeps the sun, and moon, and stars in their

courses, that bounds the raging sea with the sands, and says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." Thou art about to converse with him before whom the earth will quake, and devils tremble; before whose bar thou must shortly stand, and all the world with thee, to receive their doom. Why should not the dread of his name possess my soul!"

2. Labour to apprehend the greatness of the work which thou attemptest. If thou wast pleading for thy life at the bar of a judge, thou wouldst be serious; and yet that were but a trifle to this. If thou wast engaged in such a work as David was against Goliath, whereon the kingdom's deliverance did depend, thou wouldst be serious; and yet considered in itself, that were nothing to this. Suppose thou wast going to such a wrestling as Jacob's; suppose thou wast going to see the sight, which the three disciples saw in the mount; how seriously, how reverently wouldst thou both approach and behold! If some angel from heaven should but appoint to meet thee, at the time and place of thy contemplations, how dreadfully, how apprehensively wouldst thou go forth to meet him! Why, consider then with what a spirit thou shouldst meet the Lord, and with what seriousness and dread thou shouldst daily converse with him. When Manoah had seen but an angel, he cries out, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

3. Consider the blessed issue of the work. If it succeeds, it will be an admission of thee into the presence of God, a beginning of thy eternal glory on earth, a means to make thee live above the rate of other men, and admit thee into the next room to the angels themselves: a means to make thee both live and die joyfully and blessedly. Now, the prize being so great, thy preparation should be corresponding thereto. There is none on earth who live such a life of joy and blessedness, as those that are acquainted with this heavenly conversation. The joys of all other men are but like the play of children, or the laughter of fools. It is he who trades with heaven

that is the only gainer; and he who neglects it is the only loser. O then how seriously should this work be done!

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## CHAPTER VI.

### OF THE FACULTIES WHICH ARE EXERCISED IN HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION.

To draw the heart yet nearer to the work, I shall now show you what powers of the soul must be exercised in heavenly contemplation.

I. You must go to the memory, which is the magazine or treasury of the understanding, and thence you must draw those heavenly doctrines which you intend to make the subject of your meditation. You may, for this purpose, look over any promise of eternal life in the Bible, any description of the glory of the saints, or the very articles of the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Some one sentence concerning these eternal joys, may afford you matter for many years' meditation; yet it will be a point of wisdom to have always a stock of matter in your memory, that so, when you should use it, you may bring forth out of your treasury things new and old. If we should take things in order, and observe some method in respect of the matter, and meditate first on one truth concerning eternity, and then on another, it would not be amiss; and if any should be barren of matter through weakness of memory, they may have notes or books on this subject to assist them.

II. When you have drawn from your memory the matter of your meditation, your next work is to present it to your judgment. Open the case as fully as thou canst,—set forth the several ornaments of the crown, and the several dignities belonging to the kingdom. Let judgment deliberately view them, and take as exact a survey of them as it can. Then put the question, and require a determination. Is there hap-

piness in all this or not? Is there not here enough to make me blessed? Can he want any thing who fully possesses God? Is there any thing higher for a creature to attain? Thus urge thy judgment to pass an upright sentence, and compel it to subscribe to the perfection of the celestial happiness, and to leave this sentence under its hand upon record. If thy senses should begin to mutter, and put in a word for fleshly pleasure or profits, let judgment hear what each can say; weigh the arguments of the world and the flesh in one scale, and the arguments for the pre-eminence of glory in the other, and judge impartially which should be preferred. Try whether there be any comparison to be made between them, which is more excellent, which more satisfactory, which more pure, which frees most from misery, which advances us highest, and which is of longest continuance. Thus let deliberate judgment decide it, and let not flesh carry it by noise and violence; and when the sentence is passed and recorded in thy heart, it will be ready at hand to be produced upon any occasion, and to silence the flesh in its next attempt, and to disgrace the world in its next competition.

III. But the great work is, to exercise thy belief of the truth of thy rest; and that in respect both of the truth of the promise, and of the truth of thy own interest in it. As unbelief causes the languishing of all our graces, so faith would do much to revive and actuate them, if it were but revived and actuated in itself. Our belief of the truth of the Scripture, I conceive as needful to be exercised and confirmed, as almost any point of faith. Though few complain of their not believing the Scripture, yet I conceive it to be the commonest part of unbelief, and the very root of bitterness, which spoils our graces. Perhaps thou hast not a positive belief of the contrary, nor dost thou expressly think that Scripture is not the word of God: and yet thou mayest have but little belief that the Scripture is the word of God. If we did fully believe that there is such a glory, and that within a few days our eyes shall behold it, O what passions would it raise

within us! Were we thoroughly persuaded that every word in the Scripture concerning the inconceivable joys of the kingdom, and the inexpressible blessedness of the life to come, is the very word of the living God, and would certainly be performed to the smallest tittle, O what astonishing apprehensions of that life would it produce in our minds! What amazing horror would seize upon our hearts, if we found ourselves strangers to the conditions of that life, and utterly ignorant of our portion therein! What love, what longings would it raise within us! and how would it transport us with joy upon the least assurance of our title!

Let this therefore be a chief part of thy business in meditation. Produce the strong arguments for the truth of Scripture: plead them against thy unbelieving nature. Answer and silence all the cavils of infidelity; read over the promises; study all confirming providences; call forth thine own recorded experiences; remember the Scriptures which have already been fulfilled, both to the church and to the saints in former ages. Get ready the clearest and most convincing arguments, and keep them by thee, and frequently use them. Then too set before your faith, the freeness, and the universality of the promise. Consider God's offer of mercy, and that he has excepted from it, no man who will accept of it. Study also the gracious disposition of Christ, and his readiness to welcome all that come to him: study all the evidences of his love, as manifested in his sufferings, in his condescension to sinners, in his easy conditions, in his exceeding patience, in his urgent invitations and his faithfulness in performing his engagements. Study also the evidences of his love in thyself; look over the works of his grace in thy soul. If thou do not find the degree which thou desirest, yet deny not that degree which thou findest; look after the sincerity more than the quantity. Remember what discoveries of thy state thou hast made formerly in the work of self-examination, how oft God has convinced thee of the sincerity of thy heart. Remember all the former testimonies of the Spirit, and all thy sweet feelings of the favour



of God, and all the prayers that he has heard and answered, and all the rare preservations and deliverances which he has wrought for thee, and all the disposals of his providence for thy good. Lay these all together, and then think with thyself, whether they do not testify his good will concerning thy salvation, and may not well be pleaded against thine unbelief.

IV. When thy meditations have thus proceeded about the truth of thy happiness, the next part of the work is to meditate on its goodness, that when the judgment has determined, and faith has apprehended, it may then pass on to excite thy affections.

1. The first affection to be exercised is LOVE. The object of this, as I have told you, is goodness. Here, then, Christian, is the soul-reviving part of thy work. Go to thy memory, thy judgment, and thy faith; and from them produce the excellencies of thy rest. Let thy faith, as it were, take thy heart by the hand, and show it the sumptuous buildings of thy eternal habitation, and the glorious ornaments of thy Father's house; show it those mansions which Christ is preparing, and display before it the honours of the kingdom. Let faith lead thy heart into the presence of God, and draw as near as thou canst, and say, "Behold the ancient of days,—the Lord Jehovah, whose name is I AM: This is the cause of all causes, the spring of action, the fountain of life: This is he who made the world by a word, who upholds the earth, and rules the nations. This is he that loved thee from everlasting, who endued thee with understanding, and beautified thee with his gifts; who maintains thee in life, and health, and comfort; who dignified thee with thy honours, and distinguished thee from the vilest and most miserable of men. This is the Lord that has crowned thee with his benefits, 'prepared a table for thee in the presence of thine enemies, and caused thy cup to run over.' This is he whom angels and saints do praise, and whom the host of heaven shall magnify for ever."

Thus expatiate in the praises of God, and display

his excellencies to thine own heart, till thou feel the fire in thy breast begin to kindle.

But if thou dost not yet feel thy love in exercise, lead thy heart further, and show it yet more. Show it the Son of the living God, whose name is, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Show it the King of saints on the throne of his glory, who is "the first and the last,"—who "was, and is, and is to come,—who liveth and was dead, and behold, he liveth for evermore"—who has made thy peace by the blood of his cross, and has prepared thee with himself, an habitation of peace. Draw near and behold him. It is he that brought thee up from the pit of hell. It is he that reversed the sentence of thy damnation; that bore the curse which thou shouldst have borne, and restored thee to the blessing which thou hadst forfeited, and purchased the inheritance which thou shalt possess for ever. This is He, who would rather die than thou shouldst die,—who chose thy life before his own,—who pleads his blood before his Father, and makes continual intercession for thee. If he had not suffered, O what hadst thou suffered? What hadst thou been, if he had not redeemed thee? Whither hadst thou gone, if he had not called thee? There was but a step between thee and hell, when he stepped in, and bore the stroke: and is there not here fuel enough to kindle thy love?

If the arguments now mentioned rouse not up thy love, thou hast more of the same nature at hand. Thou hast all Christ's personal excellencies to study; thou hast all his particular mercies to thyself, both special and common; thou hast all his sweet and near relations to thee; thou hast the happiness of thy perpetual abode with him in heaven; all these offer themselves to thy meditation, with all their several branches and excellencies. Only follow them close to thy heart; ply the work, and let it not cool. Deal with thy heart, as Christ did with Peter, when he asked him thrice over, "Lovest thou me?" till he was grieved, and answered, "Lord, thou knowest

that I love thee." Say to thy heart, "Lovest thou thy Lord?" Ask it the second time, and urge it the third time, "Lovest thou thy Lord," till thou grieve it, and shame it out of its stupidity, and it can truly say, "Thou knowest that I love Him."

2. The next affection to be excited is **DESIRE**. The object of this is goodness considered as absent, or not yet attained. This being so necessary an attendant of love, and being excited by much the same considerations, you will need the less direction relative to it, and therefore I shall touch but briefly on this. If love be warm, I am sure your desire will not be cold.

When thou hast thus viewed the goodness of the Lord, and contemplated the pleasures that are at his right hand, proceed thus with thy meditations. Think with thyself, "Where have I been? What have I seen? O the incomprehensible astonishing glory! O the rare transcendent beauty! O blessed souls that now enjoy it, that see a thousand times more clearly, what I have seen but darkly at this distance, and scarcely discerned through the interposing clouds! What a difference is there betwixt my state and theirs! I am sighing; they are singing. I am sinning; they are pleasing God. I have a sinful soul, they are perfect and without spot or blemish. I am here entangled in the love of the world; they are taken up with the love of God. I live, indeed amongst the means of grace, and possess the fellowship of my fellow believers; but I have none of their immediate views of God, none of that fellowship which they enjoy. They have none of my cares and fears; they weep not in secret; they languish not in sorrows; all tears are wiped away from their eyes. O happy, happy souls! Alas, that I must dwell in corrupt flesh, when my brethren and companions dwell with God! Alas, that I must pray and wait, and wait and pray, when they do nothing but love and praise. O blessed souls! I may not,—I dare not envy your happiness; I rather rejoice in my brethren's prosperity, and am glad to think of the day when I

shall be admitted into your fellowship. Why must I stay, and groan, and weep, and wait! My Lord is gone,—he has left this earth, and is entered into his glory: my brethren are gone, my friends are there, my house, my hope, my all are there! And must I stay behind to sojourn here? If the saints were all here, if Christ were here, then it were no grief for me to stay. If the bridegroom were present, who would mourn? But when my soul is so far distant from my God, wonder not what ails me, if I now complain. But seeing it is the promised land of my rest, and the state I must be advanced to myself, and since my soul draws near, and is almost at it, I will love and long,—I will look and desire,—I will breathe out blessed Calvin's motto, "How long, Lord, how long! how long, Lord, holy and true, wilt thou suffer this soul to pant and groan; and wilt not open and let him in, who waits and longs to be with thee!"

Thus, Christian, let thy thoughts aspire. Thus whet the desires of thy soul by these meditations, till thy soul long, as David did, for the waters of Bethlehem, and say, "O that one would give me to drink of the wells of salvation!" and till thou canst say, as he did on another occasion, "I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord."

3. The next affection to be exercised is HOPE. This is of singular use to the soul. It helps exceedingly to support it in sufferings; it encourages it to venture on the greatest difficulties; it firmly establishes it in the most shaking trials; it mightily enlivens it in duties, and is the spring that sets all the wheels in motion. Who would preach, were it not in the hope of prevailing with poor sinners for their conversion and confirmation? Who would pray, but for his hope of prevailing with God? Who would believe, or obey, or strive, or suffer, or do any thing for heaven, were it not for the hope that he has of obtaining it? Would the mariner sail and the merchant adventure, if they had not hope of safety and success? Would the husbandman plough and sow, if he had not hope of increase at harvest? Would the soldier

fight, if he had not hope of victory? Surely no man would adventure upon known impossibilities. Even the false hope of the wicked supports and maintains a kind of comfort, correspondent to their hope; though, it is true, their hope will die with them. How much more will the saints' hopes refresh and support them! If your hope dies,—your duties die, your endeavours die, your joys die, and your souls die.

Therefore, Christian, think thus with thine own heart: "Why should I not confidently and comfortably hope, when the kingdom is at the disposal of so bounteous a God, and when my soul is in the hands of so compassionate a Saviour! Did he ever manifest any backwardness to my good, or discover the least inclination to my ruin? Has he not, on the contrary, sworn that he delights not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn and live? Have not all his dealings with me witnessed the same? Did he not remind me of my danger, when I never feared it? And why was this, if he would not have me escape it? Did he not remind me of my happiness, when I had no thoughts of it? And why was this, but that he would have me enjoy it? How often has he drawn me to himself, when I have drawn backward, and would have broken away from him! What restless importunity has he used in his suit! How has his Spirit incessantly solicited my heart, with winning suggestions and persuasions for my good! And would he have done all this, if he had been willing that I should perish? Have I not a sure promise, yea, the truth of God, on which to build my hope? It is true, the glory is out of sight. I have not beheld the mansions of the saints. Who has ascended up to discover it, and descended to tell us what he had seen? Yet the word is near me. Have I not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles? I will say, therefore, in the midst of my greatest sufferings, with the church, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that I both hope, and quietly wait for the

salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. I will sit alone, and keep silence, because I have borne it upon me. I will put my mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. For the Lord will not cast off for ever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.' Though I languish and die, yet will I hope; for he has said, 'The righteous hath hope in his death.' Though I must lie down in dust and darkness, yet shall my flesh rest in hope. If I had to satisfy divine justice for my sins, there had then been no hope; but Christ has made atonement for our transgressions, and has brought in a better hope, by which we may now draw nigh to God; therefore will I 'turn to this stronghold, as a prisoner of hope.'"

4. The next affection to be exercised is **COURAGE** or **BOLDNESS**. When you have thus mounted on the wings of love, desire, and hope, go on, and think further thus with yourselves, "And will God indeed dwell with men? And is there such a glory within the reach of hope? O why do I not then lay hold upon it? Where is the cheerful vigour of my spirit? Why do I not run with speed the race that is set before me? Why do I not set upon mine enemies on every side, and valiantly break through all resistance, and take the kingdom by force? What should dismay me? Is God with me, or against me in the work? Will Christ stand by me, or will he not? If it were a way of sin that leads to death, then I might expect that God would resist me, and stand in my way with the drawn sword of his displeasure, or at least overtake me to my grief at last. But is he against the obeying of his own commands? Is perfect goodness opposed to any thing but evil? Does he bid me seek, and will he not assist me in it? Does he urge me to work, and will he after all be against me in it? It cannot be. O blessed rest! O glorious state! Who would sell thee for dreams and shadows? Who would be enticed or affrighted from thee? Who would not strive, and fight, and watch, and run, and

that with violence, even to the last breath, if he may but hope at last to obtain thee? Surely none but those that know thee not, and believe not thy glory." Thus you see with what kind of meditations you may excite your courage, and raise your resolutions.

5. The last affection to be exercised is Joy. This is the end of all the others; love, desire, hope and courage, all tend to the raising of our joy.

Well, then, by this time, if thou hast managed well the former work, thou art got within view of thy rest; thou believest the truth of it; thou art convinced of the excellency of it; thou art fallen in love with it; thou longest after it; thou hopest for it, and thou art resolved courageously to venture all for obtaining it. But is there in this any work for joy? What! is it nothing to have a deed of gift of eternal life from God? Is it nothing to live in daily expectation of entering the kingdom? Is not my assurance of being soon glorified, a ground of inexpressible joy? Is it no delight to the heir of a kingdom to think of what he must hereafter possess, though at present he differ little from a servant? Am I not commanded to "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God?"

"It is the Father's good pleasure to give thee the kingdom." Seest thou this astonishing glory above thee? Why, all this is thy own inheritance. This crown is thine, these pleasures are thine, this company, this beautiful place is thine, all are thine, because thou art Christ's, and Christ is God's. When thou wast united to him, thou hadst all this with him.

Thus take thy heart into the land of promise. Show it the pleasant hills, and fruitful valleys; show it the clusters of grapes which thou hast gathered, and by these convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with something better than milk and honey. Enter the gates of the holy city, traverse the streets of the new Jerusalem, walk about Sion, go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces. See, it has "the glory of God, and her light is like unto a stone most precious; and it hath a wall great and high; and it hath twelve gates, and at

the gates twelve angels; and the building of the wall is of jasper, and the city is of pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundation of the wall is garnished with all manner of precious stones; and the twelve gates are twelve pearls; every several gate is of one pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass; and there is no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour unto it; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there." What sayest thou to all this? This is thy rest, O my soul; this shall be the place of thy everlasting habitation.

Here must I lodge, here must I live, here must I praise, here must I love, and be beloved. I shall shortly be one of this heavenly choir; I shall then be better skilled in the music. Among this blessed company I shall take my place. My voice shall join to make up the melody. My tears will then be wiped away; my groans exchanged for songs of praise; my cottage of clay will be exchanged for this palace, and my prison dress for these splendid robes. My corrupt flesh shall be put off, and a sun-like spiritual body put on: for "the former things shall have passed away." "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." There trouble and lamentation cease, and the voice of sorrow is not heard. When the wise men saw but the star of Christ, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. But I shall shortly see the star of Jacob, even him who is the bright and morning star. If the women returned from the sepulchre with great joy, when they but heard he was risen from the dead,—what joy shall I feel when I shall see him not only risen, but reigning in glory, and myself raised to a blessed communion with him? Then shall we have "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and



the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," when he has made Zion "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### HELPS FOR EXCITING THE AFFECTIONS IN HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION.

I PROCEED to show you what helps you should use, to make your meditations of heaven more quickening, and more influential. This is the chief thing at which I aim, that you may not content yourselves simply with cogitation, but may have a lively sense of all upon your hearts. This you will find the most difficult part of the work. It is easier barely to think of heaven a whole day, than to be lively and affectionate in these thoughts one quarter of an hour. Let us, therefore, yet a little further consider what may be done, to make your thoughts of heaven affecting, elevating thoughts.

Here therefore you must understand, that the simple work of faith has many disadvantages with us, in comparison of the work of sense. Faith is imperfect, for we are renewed but in part; it meets with a world of resistance, and being supernatural, is ever prone to decline and to languish, unless it is continually renewed and excited; but sense is natural, and therefore continues while nature continues. The objects of faith are far distant; we must go as far as heaven for our joys; but the objects of sense are near at hand. It is no easy matter to rejoice at that which we never saw, nor ever knew the man that did see it; and this upon a mere promise which is written in the Bible; but to rejoice in that which we see and feel, in that of which we have possession already, this is not difficult. Well then, what should be done in such a case? Why surely it will be a point of spiritual prudence, and a

singular help to the furthering of the work of faith, to call in our senses to its assistance. If we can make friends of these enemies, and make them instruments of raising us to God, which are the usual means of drawing us from him, I think we shall perform a very excellent work. Surely it is both possible and lawful, yea and necessary too, to do something in this way; for God would not have given us either our senses themselves, or their usual objects, if they might not be serviceable to his own praise, and helps to raise us to the apprehension of higher things. To assist thee in thy meditations, attend, therefore, to the rules following:—

I. When thou settest thyself to meditate on the joys of heaven, think on them boldly as Scripture has expressed them; bring down thy conceptions to the reach of sense. When we attempt to think of God and glory in proper conceptions without such helps, we are lost, and have nothing to fix our thoughts upon. Put Christ therefore no farther from you, than he has put himself, lest the Divine nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ as in our own nature glorified; think of your fellow saints as men made perfect; think of the city as the Spirit has expressed it. Draw as strong suppositions as thou canst from thy senses for the helping of thy affections. It is lawful to suppose we see for the present, that which God has in prophecies revealed, and which we shall ere long really see in more unspeakable brightness. Suppose thyself now beholding the city of God; and that thou hadst been companion with John in his survey of its glory; and hadst seen the thrones, the Majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining splendour which he saw: suppose thou hadst been his fellow-traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that thou hadst seen the saints clothed in white robes, with palms of victory in their hands: suppose thou hadst heard the song of Moses and of the Lamb; or didst even now hear them praising and glorifying the living God. If thou hadst indeed beheld all these things, in what a rapture wouldst thou be! And the

more seriously thou puttest this supposition to thyself, the more will the meditation elevate thy heart. I would not have thee, as the papists, draw them in pictures, or use similar ways to represent them. This, as it is a course forbidden by God, so it would but seduce and draw down thy heart: but get the liveliest picture of them in thy mind which thou possibly canst. Meditate on them, as if thou wert all the while beholding them, and as if thou wert even hearing the hallelujahs, while thou art thinking of them, till thou canst say, "Methinks I see a glimpse of the glory! Methinks I hear the shouts of joy and praise! Methinks I stand by Abraham and David, Peter and Paul, and more of these triumphing souls! Methinks I even see the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at his bar to receive their doom! Methinks I hear him say, Come, ye blessed of my Father! and even see them go rejoicing into the joy of their Lord! My very dreams of these things have deeply affected me: and should not these just suppositions affect me much more? What if I had with Paul seen things unutterable? Would I not have been exalted (and that perhaps above measure) as well as he? What if I had stood in the room of Stephen, and seen heaven opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God? Surely that one sight was worth suffering a storm of stones. O that I might but see what he saw, though I should also suffer what he suffered! What if I had seen such a sight as Micaiah saw, "the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left?" Why these men of God did see such things; and I shall shortly see far more than ever they saw, till they were loosed from this flesh, as I shall ere long be."

Thus you see how the conception of the state of blessedness, as the Holy Spirit has in condescending language represented it, and our raising of strong suppositions from our bodily senses, will further our affections in this heavenly work.

II. Compare the objects of sense with the objects

of faith. In this way we may compel sense to afford us that medium, from whence we may conclude the transcendent worth of glory, by arguing from sensitive delights as from the less to the greater. And here for your further assistance, I shall furnish you with some of these comparative arguments.

1. Compare the delights above with the corrupt delights of sensual men. Think with yourselves, when you would be sensible of the joys above, Is it such a delight to a sinner to do wickedly? and will it not be inexpressibly more delightful to live with God? Has the drunkard such delight in his cups and his companions, that he will part with his credit, and estate and salvation, rather than forsake them? Surely then there are high delights with God! If the way to hell can afford such pleasure, what must be the pleasure of the saints in heaven! If the covetous man has so much pleasure in his wealth, and the ambitious man in power and titles of honour, what pleasure must the saints have in the everlasting treasures, and in the heavenly honours, when they shall be set above principalities and powers, and be made the glorious spouse of Christ! What pleasure do the voluptuous find in their sensual courses! How closely will they follow their recreations from morning to night! How delightfully will they sit at their cards and dice, hours, and days, and nights together! O the delight that must needs then be, in beholding the face of the living God, and in singing forth praises to him and the Lamb, which will be our recreation when we come to our everlasting rest!

2. Compare the delights above, with the lawful delights of the senses. Think with thyself, "How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry, especially that which my soul loves! What delight has the taste in some pleasant fruits, and in some well relished meats! O what delight then shall my soul have in feeding upon Christ the living bread, and in eating with him at his table in his kingdom! How pleasant is drink in the extremity of thirst! The delight of it to a man in a fever or other drought, can

scarcely be expressed. O then how delightful will it be to my soul to drink of the fountain of living waters, of which whosoever drinks shall thirst no more! How delightful are pleasing odours to the smell! How delightful is perfect music to the ear! How delightful are beauteous sights to the eye,—such as curious pictures, sumptuous buildings, walks, prospects, gardens stored with variety of beauteous and odoriferous flowers, or pleasant meadows, which are natural gardens! O then think every time thou beholdest them, what a fragrant smell has the precious ointment which is poured on the head of our glorified Saviour, and which will be poured on the heads of all his saints, and which will fill all heaven with its odour and perfume! How delightful is the music of the heavenly host! How glorious the building not made with hands, and the house in which God himself dwells, and the walks, and prospects, and the other delights of the celestial paradise!”

3. Compare the delights above with the delights of natural knowledge. This is far beyond the delights of sense; and the delights of heaven are farther beyond it. What a pleasure is it to dive into the secrets of nature, and to find out the mysteries of the arts and sciences! If we make a new discovery in any of these, or see a little more than we saw before, what singular pleasure does it afford us! Think then what high delights there must be in the knowledge of God and Christ. When we light on some choice and learned book, how we are taken with it! We can read and study it day and night; we can leave meat, and drink, and sleep, to read it. What delights then are there at God’s right hand, where ‘we shall know even as we are known!’”

4. Compare the delights above with the delights of the natural affections. What sweetness is there in the exercise of natural affection to husbands or wives, to parents, children, or friends! The delight which a pair of special faithful friends find in loving and enjoying one another, is most sweet and pleasing: “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan,”

says David, "very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Think then, if the delights of close and cordial friendship be so great, what delight shall we have in the friendship of the Most High God, and in our mutual amity with Jesus Christ, and in the most affectionate love of the angels and saints! Surely this will be a closer and stricter friendship than ever was between any friends on earth; and these will be more lovely and desirable friends than any that ever the sun beheld; and our affections to our Father, and our Saviour, but especially his affection to us, will be such as here we never knew. We shall then love a thousand times more strongly and sweetly than now we can; and as all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is the attribute and work of love. What joy will there be then in this mutual love!

5. Compare the excellencies of heaven with those glorious works of creation which our eyes do now behold. How much of wisdom, and power, and goodness, appears in the fair fabric of this world! What skilful workmanship is there in the body of a man, yea in the body of every beast, and even of every insect and every worm! What excellency is there in every plant we see, in flowers, in herbs, in trees, in the roots, the leaves, the fruits! But especially if we contemplate the greater works of God; if we consider the whole body of this earth, and its creatures, and inhabitants; the ocean of waters, the variation of the seasons, and of the face of the earth; the interchange of spring and autumn, of summer and winter. When thou walkest forth in the evening, behold the stars, how they glisten, and in what numbers they bespangle the firmament. View the wide expanded heavens. What splendour is in the least of yonder stars! What a vast, what a bright resplendent body has yonder moon! What an inconceivable glory has yonder sun! Yet all this is nothing to the glory of heaven. Yonder sun must there be laid aside as useless, for it would not be seen for the

brightness of Deity. This whole earth is but my Father's footstool. So much wisdom and power as appear in all these various works, so much, and far more greatness, and goodness, and happiness, shall I enjoy in the fruition of God."

6. Compare the delights which thou shalt enjoy above, with the excellency of those admirable works of providence, which God exercises in the church and in the world. What glorious things has the Lord wrought! If we had seen the ten plagues of Egypt; or the sea stand as a wall on the right hand, and on the left, and the dry land appear in the midst, and the children of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his people swallowed up; or if we had seen the rock gush forth streams, or the manna and quails rained down from heaven; or the earth open and swallow up the wicked, or their armies slain with hailstones by an angel, or by one another;—would not these have appeared wondrous, glorious sights? But we shall see far greater things than these; and as our sights shall be more wonderful, so also they shall be more sweet. Surely if we observe but common providences, the motions of the sun, the tides of the ocean, the watering of the earth with rain as a garden, the keeping in order a confused wicked world, with many similar circumstances, they are all very admirable. But to think of the Zion of God, of the vision of the Divine Majesty, of the comely order of the heavenly host, how much more admirable sights will these be!

7. Compare the mercies which thou shalt have above, with those temporal mercies which thou hast thyself enjoyed through life. If thou be a Christian indeed, I know thou hast, at least in thy heart, many precious favours upon record. The very remembrance and rehearsal of them is sweet: how much more sweet was the actual enjoyment! But all these are nothing, to the mercies which are above. Look over the mercies of thy youth and education, the mercies of thy riper years, the mercies of thy prosperity, and of thy adversity, the mercies of thy several places and

relations. Canst thou think on the several places in which thou hast lived, and not remember that they have each had their several mercies? O how sweet was it to thee, when God resolved thy doubts, when he overcame and silenced thy fears and unbelief, when he rescued thee from miseries and dangers, into which thy own counsel would have plunged thee, when he eased thy pains, and healed thy diseases and raised thee up as from the very gates of death. Now were not all these most precious mercies? Yet these are but small things for thee in the eyes of God; he intends for thee far greater things than these; they are scarcely a taste of what thou shalt yet enjoy. How sweet then will be the glory of his presence! And how high will his eternal love exalt me! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies, what shall I find in my home, and in my triumph! If God communicate so much to me while I remain a vile sinner, what will he bestow when I am a perfect saint! If I have had so much in this strange country, and at such a distance from him, what shall I have in heaven, in his immediate presence, where I shall ever stand before his throne!"

8. Compare the comforts which thou shalt have above with those which thou hast here received in the ordinances. Have not the Holy Scriptures been to thee as an open fountain flowing with comforts night and day? When thou hast been in trouble, there thou hast met with refreshing. When thy faith has staggered, there it has been confirmed. What suitable passages has the Spirit set before thee! What seasonable promises has he brought into thy mind! Well mayst thou say with David, "Unless thy law had been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." Think then, if the word be so full of consolation, what overflowing springs shall we find in God! If his letters are so comfortable, what will be the words that flow from his blessed lips,— the beams that stream from his glorious face! If Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible, what would he take for the joys which it reveals? If the



promise be so sweet, what will be the performance? If the testament of our Lord, and our charter for the kingdom, be so comfortable, what will be our possession of the kingdom itself?

Think further, "What delights have I found in the word preached! How oft have I gone to church troubled in spirit, and returned home rejoicing! How oft have I gone full of doubts and fears, and God has sent me home with my doubts resolved, and persuaded me of his love in Christ! What cordials have I met with in my saddest afflictions! What preparatives to fortify me for my next trials! Well then, if the feet of the messengers of these tidings of peace be beautiful, how beautiful must be the face of the Prince of Peace! If the treasure be so precious in earthen vessels, what will be the treasure that is laid up in heaven!

Think also what a joy it is to have access to God and acceptance with him in prayer,—that when any thing ails me, I may go to him and open my case, and unbosom my soul as to my most faithful friend, especially as knowing his sufficiency and willingness to relieve me. O how surpassing, how unspeakable then will be my joy, when I shall receive every blessing that I need, and when my necessities and miseries shall be removed, and when God himself shall be the portion and inheritance of my soul!

What consolation also have we oft received in observing the Supper of the Lord! What a privilege is it to be admitted to sit at his table, to have his covenant sealed to me by outward signs, and his special love sealed to my heart by his Spirit! Yet all the life and comfort which these impart, consists in their declaring and assuring me of the comforts which are hereafter: their use is but darkly to signify and seal these higher mercies. When I shall drink with him of the fruit of the vine in his Father's kingdom, it will be indeed a pleasant feast. O the difference between the last supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven!

Think yet further with thyself thus:—The commu-

nion of the saints on earth is a most delectable mercy. What a pleasure is it to live with intelligent and heavenly Christians! David says, they were all his delight. O then what delightful society shall I have above! The communion of saints is there somewhat worth, where their understandings are fully cleared, and their affections so highly advanced.

9. Compare the mercies thou shalt have above, with the spiritual mercies which Christ has here bestowed on thy soul; the glorious change which thou shalt have at last, with the gracious change which the Spirit has wrought on thy heart; the comforts of thy glorification, with the comforts of thy sanctification. There is not the smallest grace in thee, which is genuine and sincere, nor a hearty desire after Christ, but is of more value than the kingdoms of this world. A renewed nature is the very image of God. If we are said to be like God, and to bear his image, and to be holy as he is holy, when, alas! we are pressed down with a body of sin,—surely we shall then be much more like God, when we are perfectly holy and without blemish, and have no such thing as sin within us. Is the desire of heaven so precious a thing? what then is the thing itself which is desired? Is our joy in foreseeing and believing so sweet? what then will be the joy in the full possessing? O the delight that a Christian has in the lively exercise of some of these affections! What good does it do his very heart, when he can feelingly say, he loves his Lord! What sweetness is there in the very act of loving! Yea, even those troublous passions of sorrow and fear, are yet delightful, when they are rightly exercised. What a comfort is it to my doubting soul, when I have a little assurance of the sincerity of my graces, when upon examination, I can trace the Spirit in his sanctifying works! How much more will it comfort me, to find that the Spirit has safely conducted me to heaven and placed me in the arms of my Redeemer! What a change was it that the Spirit effected upon my soul, when he “turned me from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God!” Why then consider, how much greater

will that glorious change be! It will be beyond expression, beyond conception. How oft, when I have thought of this change in my regeneration, have I cried out, O blessed day, and blessed be the Lord that I ever saw it! How then should I cry out in heaven, O blessed eternity, and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it! Was the mercy of my conversion so exceeding great that the angels of God did rejoice to see it? Surely then the mercy of my salvation will be so great, that the angels will congratulate my felicity.

Lastly, compare the joy which thou shalt have in heaven, with that which the saints of God have found in the way to it, and in the foretaste of it. When thou seest a heavenly man rejoice, think what it is that so affects him. When did God ever reveal the least of himself to any of his saints, but the joy of their hearts was correspondent to the revelation? Paul was so lifted up with what he saw, that he was in danger of being exalted above measure, and must have a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. When Peter saw Christ in his transfiguration, which was but a glimpse of his glory, what a rapture and ecstasy is he cast into! "Master," says he, "it is good for us to be here; let us here build three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias;" as if he had said, "O let us not return to our mean and suffering state. Is it not better that we stay here? Are there not here better company, and sweeter pleasures?" Yet how short does Paul's vision come of the saints' vision above with God! How small a part of the glory which we shall see, was that which so transported Peter on the mount! I confess these were all extraordinary foretastes, but little to the full beatifical vision. How oft have we read and heard of dying saints, who when they had scarcely strength and life enough to express themselves, have been as full of joy as their hearts could hold; and when their bodies have been under the extremities of sickness, yea, ready to feel the pangs of death, have yet had so much of heaven in their spirits, that their joy has far surpassed

their sorrows! Now, if a spark of this fire be so glorious, and that in the midst of the sea of adversity, what shall that sun of glory be! O the joy which the martyrs of Christ have felt, in the midst of the scorching flames! Surely they had life and sense as well as we, and were flesh and blood as well as we. It must needs, therefore, be some excellent thing which so rejoices their souls, while their bodies are burning.

But hast not thou thyself had some foretaste of these heavenly joys? Judge then of the ocean of joy by those drops which thou hast tasted. Thou hast here enjoyed some refreshing comforts, and by this little thou mayst conjecture the quality of the whole. Has not God sometimes revealed himself extraordinarily to thy soul, and let a beam of glory fall upon it? Hast thou not been ready to say, O that it might be thus with my soul continually,—that I might always feel what I now feel! Didst thou never cry out with the martyr, “He is come, he is come?” Didst thou never, under a lively sermon of heaven, or in thy retired contemplations on that blessed state, perceive thy drooping spirits revive, and the light of heaven break forth on thy soul, as the morning star, or as the dawning of the day? Now think with thyself, “What is the earnest to the full inheritance? All this light that so amazes and rejoices me, is but a candle lighted from heaven, to lead me thither through this world of darkness! If the light of a star in the night, or the little glimmering at the break of day be such; what will be the light of the sun at noontide? If some godly men have been so overwhelmed with joy, that they have cried out,—‘Hold, Lord, stay thy hand; I can bear no more!’ O what will be my joys in heaven, when as the object of my joy will be the most glorious God, so my soul will be made capable of seeing and enjoying him; and though the light be ten thousand times greater than the sun’s, yet shall my eyes be able to behold it for ever.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HEART IN HEAVENLY  
CONTEMPLATION.

LASTLY, I proceed to guide you in managing your hearts through this work, and to show you wherein you have need to be exceedingly watchful. I have shown before, what must be done with your hearts in your preparation for the work, and in your setting about it; I shall now show what is to be done with your hearts in the performance of the duty. Our chief work will here be, to discover to you the danger, and that will direct you to the fittest remedy. Let me, therefore, here tell you, that whenever you set about this heavenly employment, you will find your own hearts your greatest hinderance, and they will prove false to you in one or all of these four degrees: first,—they will be so backward, that you will hardly get them to engage in the work; or, secondly,—they will betray you by their idleness in the work, pretending to do it when they do it not; or, thirdly,—they will interrupt the work by their frequent excursions, and turning aside to every object which presents itself; or, fourthly, they will spoil the work by cutting it short, and be gone before you have done any good in it. I, therefore, forewarn you, as you value the inestimable comfort of this work, that you faithfully resist these four dangerous evils, or else all I have said hitherto will be in vain.

I. Guard against the backwardness of thy heart to this work. Thou wilt find it as backward to this, I think, as to any duty in the world. O what excuses it will make! what evasions it will find out! Either it will question, whether it be a duty or not; or if it be so to others, yet whether it be so to thee. It will

take up any thing like reason to plead against it; it will tell thee, that this is a work for ministers that have nothing else to study; or for persons that have more leisure than thou hast. If thou be a minister, it will tell thee, this is the duty of the people; that thou hast this company to wait upon, or that business must be done. It may be, it will set thee upon some other duty, and so make one duty jostle out another; for it had rather go to any duty than to this. Perhaps it will tell thee that other duties are greater, and therefore this must give place to them, because thou hast not time for both. Public business is of more concernment; to study and to preach for the saving of souls must be preferred before these private contemplations; as if thou hadst no time to see to the saving of thy own soul, for looking after the souls of others! Or if thy heart has nothing to say against the work, then it will trifle away the time in delays, and promise this day and the next, and still keep off from doing the business. Or, lastly, if thou wilt not be so baffled with excuses and delays, thy heart will give thee an express denial, and draw back with all the strength it has.

Well, then, what is to be done in this case? Wilt thou do it if I tell thee? Why, what wouldst thou do with a servant that was thus backward to his work; or to thy beast that should draw back, when thou wouldst have him go forward? Wouldst thou not first persuade, and then chide, and then spur him, and then force him on, and take no denial, nor let him alone, till thou hadst got him closely to fall to his work? Deal thus faithfully with thy heart; persuade it to the work; take no denial; chide it for its backwardness; use violence with it; bring it to the service, willing, or not willing. Art thou the master of thy flesh, or art thou a servant to it? Take up the authority again which God has given thee; command thy heart. If it rebel, use violence with it. If thou be too weak, call in the Spirit of Christ to thy assistance. He is never backward to so good a work, nor will deny thee his help in so just a cause. God will

be ready to help thee, if thou be not unwilling to help thyself.

II. Guard against the idleness of thy heart, lest it trifle when it should be effectually meditating. Certainly, thy heart is as likely to betray thee in this, as in any one particular about the duty. When thou hast perhaps but an hour for meditation, the time will be spent before thy heart will be serious. This doing of duty as if we did it not, undoes as many as the positive omission of it. To spend the hour in a lazy thinking of heaven, is but to lose that hour, and delude thyself. Well, what is to be done in this case? Keep thine eye always upon thy heart; look not so much to the time thou spendest in the duty, as to the quantity and quality of the work that is done.

I would not have thee of the judgment of those who think that while they are so backward to the duty, it is better to let it alone; and if mere love will not bring them to it, but there must be all this violence used to compel it, that then the service is worse than the omission. These men understand not, that this argument would cashier all spiritual obedience, because the hearts of the best being but partly sanctified, will ever be resisting so far as they are carnal. Neither do they understand well the corruption of their own natures; nor, that their sinful indisposedness will not baffle or suspend the commands of God; nor one sin excuse another. Love, I know, is a most precious grace, and should have the chief interest in all our duties: but there are means appointed by God to procure this love: and shall I not use those means, till I can use them from love? That were to neglect the means till I have the end. Must I not seek to procure love, till I have it already? There are means also for the increasing of love where it is begun; and means for the exciting of it where it is cold and dull. And must I not use these means, till it is increased and excited? Why, this duty which I am recommending is the most powerful means both to stir up thy love, and to increase it; and therefore, stay not from the duty, till thou feel thy love constrain

thee. That were to stay from the fire, till thou feel thyself warm; but fall to the work, till thou art constrained to love: and then love will constrain thee to further duty.

Let nothing, therefore, hinder thee while thou art upon the work, from plying thy heart with constant watchfulness and constraint, seeing thou hast such experience of its dulness and backwardness: let the spur be never out of its side; and whenever it slacks pace, be sure to give it new remembrances of its duty.

III. Guard against the wandering of thy heart in this duty. It will ever be ready to make excursions when you are engaged in the work. It will be turning aside like a careless servant, to talk with every one that passes by. When there should be nothing in thy mind, but the work in hand, it will be thinking of thy calling, or of thy afflictions, of every bird, or tree, or place thou seest, or of any impertinency, rather than of heaven. The cure here is the same as before, to use watchfulness and violence with your own imaginations, and as soon as they step aside to chide them in. Say to thy heart, "What! did I come hither to think of my business, or of my afflictions,—of places, and persons, and news, aye, of any thing but heaven? What! canst thou not watch one hour? Wouldst thou leave this world, and dwell in heaven with Christ for ever; and canst thou not leave it one hour out of thy thoughts, nor dwell with Christ in one hour's close meditation?" Ask thy heart, Is this thy love to thy friend? Dost thou love Christ, and the place of thy eternal abode no more than this?

Lastly, beware lest thy heart cut short the work before the time, and run away through weariness, before you have done any good in it. Thou wilt find it will be exceedingly prone to this. Thou mayest easily perceive this in other duties. If thou set thyself to pray in secret, is not thy heart ever urging thee to cut it short? Dost thou not frequently find a motion to have done? Art thou not ready to be up as soon almost as thou art down on thy knees? Why, so it will be also in thy contemplations of heaven. As fast



as thou gettest up thy heart, it will be down again : it will be weary of the work ; it will be reminding thee of other business to be executed, and stop thy heavenly walk, before thou hast well begun it. Well, what is to be done in this case ? Why the same authority and resolution, which brought it to the work, and watched it in the work, must also hold it to the work till it be done. Charge it in the name of God to stay : Say to it, If thou beg a while, and go away before thou receivest thy alms, dost thou not lose thy labour ? If thou stop before thou art at the end of thy journey, is not every step of thy travel lost ? Thou comest hither to take a walk to heaven, in the hope of having a sight of the glory which thou must inherit ; and wilt thou stop when thou art almost at the top of the hill ; and turn again before thou hast taken thy survey ? Thou camest hither in the hope of speaking with God, and wilt thou go before thou hast seen him ? Stand to the work, till something be done, till thy graces be called into action, thy affections raised, and thy soul refreshed with heavenly delights ; or if thou canst not obtain these ends at once, ply it the closer the next time, and let it not go till thou feel the blessing. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing."

The sum of all, then, is this ; as thou makest conscience of praying daily, so do thou of exercising thy graces in meditation ; and especially in meditating on the joys of heaven. To this end, set apart one hour or half an hour every day, wherein thou mayest lay aside all worldly thoughts, and with all possible seriousness and reverence, as if thou wast going to speak with God himself, or to have a sight of Christ, or of that blessed place. Do thou withdraw thyself into some secret place, and set thyself wholly to the work. If thou canst, choose Isaac's time and place, who went forth into the field in the evening to meditate : take the fittest time and place thou canst, though it be when thou art employed about thy ordinary labours.

When thou settest about the work, look up toward heaven ; let thine eye lead thee as near as it can ;

remember that there is thine everlasting rest. Study its excellency, study its reality, till thy unbelief is silenced, and thy faith prevail. If thy judgment be not yet drawn to admiration, use those sensible helps which I lately laid down. Compare thy heavenly joys with the choicest on earth, and so rise up from sense to faith. If yet this mere consideration prevail not, then plead the case with thy heart. Preach to thyself upon this text of heaven; instruct, convince, reprove, examine, admonish, encourage, and comfort thy own soul from this celestial doctrine. Draw forth those several considerations of thy rest, on which thy several affections may work, especially that affection or grace which thou intendest to exercise. If it be love, show it the loveliness of heaven, and how suitable it is to thy condition. If it be desire, consider of thy absence from this lovely object. If it be hope, consider the possibility and probability of thy obtaining it. If it be courage, consider the singular assistance and encouragements which thou mayest receive from God, the weakness of the enemy, and the necessity of overcoming. If it be joy, consider its excellent ravishing glory, thy interest in it, its certainty, and the nearness of the time when thou mayest possess it. If thy heart draw back, force it to the work. If it loiter, spur it on. If it step aside, command it to return. If it would slip away and leave the work undone, use thine authority; keep it close to the business till thou hast obtained thine end. Stir not away, if possible, till thy love flame, till thy joy be raised, till thy desire or other graces be vigorously exercised. Call in assistance also from God; mingle ejaculations with thy cogitations and soliloquies, till having seriously pleaded the case with thy heart, and reverently pleaded the case with God, thou hast pleaded thyself from a forgetful sinner to a mindful lover, from a lover of the world, to a thirster after God, from a fearful coward to a resolved Christian, from an unfruitful sadness, to a joyful life. In a word, what cannot be done one day, do the next, till thou hast pleaded thy heart from earth to heaven,—from conversing

below, to walking with God ; and till thou canst lay thy heart to rest, as in the bosom of thy Redeemer, in this meditation of thy full and everlasting rest.



## CHAPTER IX.

### AN EXAMPLE OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION.

HAVING showed thee how thou must engage in this duty, I shall now, by way of example, show thee the manner in which thou must perform it. All we have done has been but to set the instrument, thy heart, in tune ; and now we come to the music itself. All this has been but to excite in thee an appetite ; it follows now, that thou approach to the feast, that thou sit down and take what is presented before thee, and delight thy soul “as with marrow and fatness.” Whoever you are that are children of the kingdom, I have this message to you from the Lord, “Behold my dinner is prepared ; the oxen and fatlings are killed : come, for all things are now ready.” Heaven is before you, Christ is before you, the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” is before you. Make not light of this invitation ; put not off your own mercies with excuses. Whoever thou art, whether rich or poor, though in alms houses or hospitals, though in highways or hedges, my commission is, if possible, to compel you to come in : “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” The manna lies about your tents. Walk forth into the wilderness, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. The remaining work, therefore, is only to use your understandings for the warming of your affections, and to fire your hearts by the help of your heads.

## SECTION I.

*Actings of Judgment.*

REST! how sweet the sound! It is melody to my ears! It is a reviving cordial to my heart. Rest! not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as the flesh shall rest in the grave. Nor is it the satisfying of our fleshly lusts, nor such a rest as the carnal world desires. Rest we shall from all our labours, as the way and means to rest, but yet that is the smallest part. O blessed rest! when we shall never rest day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty; when we shall rest from sin, but not from worship, from suffering and sorrow, but not from solace and joy. O blessed day! when I shall rest with God, when I shall rest in the arms and bosom of my Lord! when my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God! when God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, yea, "rest in his love" to me, as I shall rest in my love to him; and "rejoice over me with joy and singing," as I shall rejoice in him!

How near is that most blessed, joyful day! It comes apace. "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Though my Lord seem to delay his coming, yet a little while and he will be here. What are a few hundred years when they are over? How surely will his sign appear; and how suddenly will he seize upon the careless world, even as the lightning that shines from east to west in a moment! Methinks I even hear the voice of his forerunners! Methinks I see him coming in the clouds, with his attending angels in majesty and glory.

Now blessed saints that have believed and obeyed, this is the end of your faith and patience; this is that for which you prayed and waited. Do you now repent your sufferings and sorrows, your self-denying and holy walking? Are your tears of repentance

now sweet or bitter? O see how the Judge smiles upon you! There is love in his looks; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in his amiable, shining face. Hark! he calls you. O joyful sentence pronounced by that blessed mouth! "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" See how your Saviour takes you by the hand; the kingdom is yours; there is your place before his throne. The Father bids you welcome to the crown of glory; however unworthy, you must be crowned. This was the project of redeeming grace,—this the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! O the frame my soul will then be in! O how love and joy will fill my bosom! But I cannot express it! I cannot conceive it!

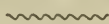
This is that joy which was procured by sorrow; this is that crown which was procured by the cross. My Lord wept that my tears might now be wiped away; he bled that I might now rejoice; he died that I might now live. This weeping, wounded Lord, shall I behold: this bleeding Saviour shall I see, and live with him that died for me. O free mercy, that can exalt so vile a wretch! free to me, though dear to Christ! O sovereign grace that has chosen me, when thousands were forsaken!

Here I shall live with all the saints! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintance with whom I prayed, and wept, and suffered,—with whom I spake of this day and place! I see the grave could not contain you; the earth and sea must give up their dead. This is not like our cottages of clay; nor like our prisons, or earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complainings, our groans, our sighs, our impatient moans; nor this melodious praise like the scoffs and revilings, the oaths and curses which we heard on earth. This body is not like the body we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life we lived. We have changed our place, we have changed our state, our thoughts, our looks, our language; we have changed, for the greater part,

our company, and the rest of our company is itself changed. Where is now the body of sin, which vexed themselves and all about them? Where are now our different judgments, our divided spirits, our exasperated passions, our strange looks, our uncharitable censures? Now we are all of one name, of one judgment, of one heart, of one glory. O sweet reconciliation! O happy union! which makes us first to be one with Christ, and then to be one among ourselves!

Thou shalt never suffer thy old temptations from Satan, the world, or thy own flesh. Thy body will no more be such a burden to thee; thy pains and sicknesses are all now cured; thou shalt be troubled with weakness and weariness no more. Thy head is not now an aching head; nor thy heart an aching heart. Thy hunger and thirst, thy cold and sleep, thy labour and study, are all gone. O what a mighty change is this! From the dunghill to the throne! from a vile body, to a body as bright as the sun in the firmament! from complainings under the displeasure of God, to the perfect enjoyment of him in love! from all my fearful thoughts of death, to this most blessed joyful life! O what a blessed change is this! Farewell sin and suffering for ever; farewell my hard and rocky heart; farewell my proud and unbelieving heart; farewell my atheistical, worldly, sensual, carnal heart; farewell repentance, confession, and supplication; farewell the most of hope and faith; and welcome love, and joy and praise. Welcome most holy, heavenly nature, which as it must be employed in beholding the face of God, so is it full of God alone, and delights in nothing else but him. O who can question the love which he so sweetly tastes, or doubt of that which with such joy he feels? Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here I shall be encircled with eternity, and come forth no more; here I shall ever live, and ever praise my Lord. My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be gray; but this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. "O death, where is now

thy sting ! O grave where is thy victory !” When millions of ages are past, my glory will be but beginning ; and when millions more are past, it will be no nearer ending. Every day is all noontide, and every month is summer, and every year is there a jubilee, and every age is full manhood, and all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity ! The glory of my glory ! the perfection of my perfection !



## SECTION II.

### *Actings of Faith.*

AN drowsy, earthly heart, how coldly dost thou think of this reviving day ! Dost thou sleep when thou thinkest of eternal rest ? Art thou inclining earthward, when heaven is before thee ? Hadst thou rather sit down here than walk in the court of the palace of God ? Dost thou now remember thy worldly business, thy carnal pleasures, thy merry company ? Wretched heart ! Is it better to be there than above with God ? Is the company better ? Are the pleasures greater ? Come away, make no excuse, make no delay. Gird up thy loins, ascend the mount, and look about thee with the eye of faith. Look not back upon the way of the wilderness, except it be when thine eyes are dazzled with the glory of God, or when thou wouldst compare the kingdom with that howling desert, that thou mayest perceive more sensibly the mighty difference. Fix thine eye upon the sun itself, and look not down to earth as long as thou art able to behold it, except it be to discern more clearly the brightness of the one, by the darkness of the other. Yonder, is thy Father’s glory,—yonder must thou dwell when thou leavest this earth,—yonder must thou remove, O my soul, when thou departest from this body ; and when the power of thy Lord shall raise it again, and join thee to it, yonder shalt thou live with God for ever. There is the New Jerusalem, the gates of which are of pearl, the foundations of precious stones, the streets and pavement of transparent gold.

Beholdest thou that sun which lights all this world? It shall be taken down as useless there, for the glory of God will darken and extinguish it.

What thinkest thou, O my soul, of this most blessed state? What! dost thou stagger at the promise of God, through unbelief? Though thou say nothing, or even profess belief, yet thou speakest so coldly and so customarily, that I much suspect thee. I know thy infidelity is thy natural vice. Didst thou believe indeed, thou wouldst be more affected with it. Why, hast thou not it under the hand, and seal, and oath of God? Can God lie? Has God made thee a promise of rest, and wilt thou come short of it, and shut out thyself, through unbelief? Thine eyes may fail thee, thy ears deceive thee,—and all thy senses prove delusions, sooner than a promise of God can delude thee.

And is this rest so sweet and so sure? O then, what mean the careless world? Do they know what it is they so neglect? Do they know for certain that the crown is before them, while they thus sit still, or follow trifles? Surely they act like men beside themselves, to mind so much their provision by the way, to strive, and care, and labour for trifles, when they are hasting so fast to another world, and their eternal happiness lies at stake. Had they one spark of reason left, they would never sacrifice their rest for toil, or sell their rest for worldly vanities, or venture heaven for the pleasures of sin. Ah, poor sinners! would that ye considered what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits. O blessed for ever be that love, that has rescued me from this bewitching darkness!

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### SECTION III.

#### *Actings of Love.*

DRAW yet nearer, O my soul; bring forth thy strongest burning love. Here is matter for it to work upon; here is something truly worth thy loving. O see what beauty presents itself. Is it not exceedingly lovely?



Is not all the beauty in the world united here? Here is a feast for thine eyes; a feast for the powers of thy soul. Dost thou need to be entreated to feed upon it? Canst thou love a little shining earth? Dost thou love a piece of animated clay? And wilt thou not love that God, that Christ, that glory which are so truly, so immeasurably lovely?

Thou lovest thy friend because he loves thee; and is the love of any friend like the love of Christ? Their weeping or bleeding for thee does not ease thee, nor stay the course of thy tears or blood; but the tears and blood that fell from thy Lord and Saviour have all a sovereign healing virtue, and are a balsam to thy wounds. O my soul! if love deserve, and should beget love, what incomprehensible love is here! Pour out all the store of thy affections here; and all is too little. O that it were more!

O my soul! dost thou love excellence? Why, thou seest nothing here below but baseness, except as they relate to thy enjoyments above. Yonder twinkling stars, that shining moon, this radiant sun, are all but as lanterns hung out from thy Father's house, to light thee while thou walkest amidst the darkness of the earth. But little dost thou know (ah little indeed,) the glory and blessed mirth that are within!

Dost thou love what is suitable? Why, what person more suitable than Christ! His Godhead, his Manhood, his fulness, his freeness, his willingness, his constancy, all proclaim him most suitable as thy friend. What more suitable to thy misery, than his mercy? Or to thy sinfulness than his pardoning love? What place more suitable to thee than heaven? Thou hast had sufficient trial of this world. Dost thou find it agree with thy nature or desires? Are these heavy sufferings, these substantial vanities suitable to thee?

Or dost thou love for interest and near relation? Why, where hast thou better interest than in heaven! or where hast thou nearer relation than there!

Dost thou love for acquaintance and familiarity? Why, though thine eyes have never seen thy Lord, yet he is never far from thee. Thou hast heard the

voice of Christ to thy very heart; thou hast received innumerable benefits from him; and art thou not yet acquainted with him? It is he that brought thee safely into the world; it is he that nursed thee up in thy tender infancy, and helped thee when thou couldst not help thyself. He taught thee to go, to speak, to read, to understand. He taught thee to know thyself and him. He opened to thee that first window whereby thou sawest into heaven. Hast thou forgotten, since thy heart was cold and careless, and he did quicken it; and hard and stubborn, and he did soften it, and make it yield?

O methinks I yet remember his voice, and feel those embracing arms that took me up. How gently did he handle me! how carefully did he dress my wounds and bind them up! My Saviour and my Lord, thou hast broken my heart; thou hast revived, thou hast overcome, thou hast won my heart. Take it, it is thine. If such a heart can please thee, take it; if it cannot, make it such as thou wouldst have it. Thus, O my soul, mayst thou remember the sweet familiarity thou hast had with Christ. He has been always ready, when thou hast earnestly sought him. He has given thee the meeting in public and in private. He has been found of thee in the congregation, in thy house, in thy chamber, in the field, in the way as thou wast walking, in thy waking nights, in thy deepest dangers.

O if bounty and compassion be an attractive of love, how unmeasurably am I bound to love him! All the mercies that have filled up my life tell me this; every condition of life through which I have passed, all my employments, and all my relations, every change that has happened to me,—all tell me, that the fountain is overflowing goodness.

Lord, what a sum of love do I owe thee! and how does my debt continually increase! How should I love again for so much love! But what? Shall I dare to think of making thee a requital! or of recompensing thy love with mine! No, Lord, I yield, I am overcome. O blessed conquest! Go on victo

riously, and still prevail, and triumph in thy love. The captive of love shall proclaim thy victory, when thou leadest me in triumph from death to life, from earth to heaven, from the tribunal to the throne.

Yet let me love thee in subjection to thy love, as thy redeemed captive, though not thy peer. Shall I not love at all, because I cannot reach thy measure? Or at least, let me heartily wish to love thee. Though I may not be able to say as Peter, Thou knowest that I love thee; yet can I say, Lord, thou knowest that I would love thee.

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Actings of Joy.*

AWAKE O my drowsy soul! leave these earthly cells and hear thy Lord bid thee rejoice. Thou hast lain here long enough in thy prison of flesh, where satan has been thy jailor, and the cares of this world have been thy irons, and fears thy scourge, and the bread and water of affliction thy food, and a carnal, hard unbelieving heart the iron gates and bars that have kept thee in, that thou couldst scarcely have leave to look through the lattices, and see one glimpse of the immortal light. The angel of the covenant now calls thee, and strikes off thy chains, and bids thee arise and follow him. Up, O my soul, and cheerfully obey, and thy bolts and bars will all fly open; follow the Lamb whithersoever he leads thee. Art thou afraid because thou knowest not whither? Shouldst thou fear to follow such a guide? Can the sun lead thee to a state of darkness? Will he lead thee to death, who died to save thee from it? Follow him, and he will give thee a sight of the New Jerusalem; he will show thee the paradise of God; he will give thee a taste of the tree of life. I know, he would have my joys exceed my sorrows; he has spread for me a table in this wilderness, and furnished it with the promises of everlasting glory, and set before me angels' food,

and he invites me to sit down, and feed plenteously thereon as a foretaste of the high delights of heaven.

But, ah my Lord, thy feast is nothing to me without an appetite. Thou hast set the dainties of heaven before me, but alas, I am blind, and cannot see them; I am sick and cannot relish them; I am so benumbed, that I cannot put forth my hand to take them. I therefore humbly beg thy grace, that as thou hast opened heaven to me in thy blessed word, so thou wouldst open mine eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it, else heaven will be no heaven to me.

Away soul tormenting cares and fears! Away ye importunate heart-vexing sorrows! At least forbear me a little while; stand by, and trouble not my aspiring soul; stay here below, whilst I go up, and see my rest. The way is strange to me, but not to Christ. There was the eternal dwelling of his glorious Deity: and thither has he also brought his assumed glorified flesh. It was his work to purchase it; it is his work to prepare it, and to prepare me for it, and to bring me to it. The eternal God of truth has given me his promise, his seal, and his oath to assure me, that believing in Christ I shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Thither shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body will very shortly follow. It is not so far, but he that is every where can bring me thither; nor so difficult and unlikely but omnipotency can effect it. And though this unbelief may diminish my delights, and much abate my joys in the way; yet shall it not abate the love of my Redeemer, nor make the promise of none effect. And can my tongue say, that I shall shortly and surely live with God; and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it believingly, and not rejoicingly? Ah faith! how sensibly do I now perceive thy weakness! Ah unbelief! if I had never heard or known it before, how sensibly do I now perceive thy malicious tyranny. But, though thou darken my light, and dull my life, and suppress my joys, yet shalt thou not be able to conquer and destroy me. There shall I and my joys survive, when thou art dead; and though thou envy

all my comforts, yet some, in despite of thee, I shall even here receive. But were it not for thee, what abundance might I have! The light of heaven would shine into my heart, and I might be as familiar there as I am on earth.

Come away, my soul, then; stop thine ears to the ignorant language of infidelity. Thou art able to answer all its arguments; or if thou be not, yet tread them under thy feet. Come away, stand not looking on that grave, nor turning up those bones, nor reading thy lesson in the dust. These lines will soon be wiped out. But raise thy eyes to heaven; and see thy name in golden letters written in the book of life before the foundation of the world. What if an angel from heaven should tell thee, that there is a mansion prepared for thee; that it shall certainly be thine own, and thou shalt possess it for ever? Would not such a message make thee glad? And dost thou make light of the infallible promises which were delivered by the Holy Spirit, and by the Son himself? Suppose thou hadst seen a fiery chariot come for thee, to carry thee up to heaven like Elijah. Would not this rejoice thee? Why, my Lord assures me, that the soul of Lazarus, though a beggar, goes not forth of its corrupted flesh, but a convoy of angels are ready to attend it, and carry it to Abraham's bosom. Can meat and drink delight me when I am hungry and thirsty? Can I find pleasure in walks, and gardens, and convenient dwellings? Can beauteous sights delight mine eyes, and sweet odours my smell; and melodious sounds mine ears? And shall not the forethought of the celestial bliss delight me? What delight have I found in my private studies, especially when they have prospered to the increase of my knowledge! Methinks I could bid the world farewell, and immure myself among my books, and look forth no more (were it a lawful course,) but as Heinsius in his library at Leyden, shut the doors upon me, and as in the lap of eternity, employ myself with sweet content among those divine souls, and pity the rich and great ones that know not this happiness. If Lipsius thought

when he did but read Seneca, that he was upon Olympus' top, above mortality and human things,—what a case shall I be in when I am beholding Christ! How delectable will my life be, when I shall fully and clearly know those things which the most learned do now know but doubtfully and darkly! In one hour I shall see all my difficulties vanish, and all my doubts resolved. Yea all the depths of divinity will be uncovered to me, and the book of God unsealed, and mine eyes opened. In knowing God, I shall know all things, that are fit or good for the creature to know. If the Queen of Sheba came from Ethiopia to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and see his glory, O how gladly should I leave this country! how cheerfully should I pass from earth to heaven to see the glory of the Eternal Majesty; and to attain myself that height of wisdom, in comparison of which the most learned on earth are ignorant silly fools! If Bernard was so ravished with the delights of his monastery (where he lived in poverty, without the common pleasures of the world,) because of its green banks, and shady bowers, and herbs, and trees, and various objects to feed the eyes, and fragrant smells, and sweet and various tunes of birds, together with the opportunity of devout contemplations, that he cries out in admiration, “Lord, what abundance of delights dost thou provide even for the poor!”—how should I be ravished with the heaven of heavens, which is not formed by the art of man, but is the matchless palace of the great King, built by himself for the residence of his glory, and the perpetual entertainment of his beloved saints; where, instead of herbs, and trees, and birds, and bowers, I shall enjoy God and my Redeemer, angels, saints, and other inexpressible pleasures; and therefore should with more admiration cry out, “Lord, what delights hast thou provided for us miserable and unworthy creatures that wait for thee!” If the honour of the ambitious, or the wealth of the covetous person increase; if they have a little more land or money, than their neighbours, how easily you may see it in their countenance

and carriage. How high do they look ! how big do they speak ! how stately and lofty do they demean themselves ! And shall not the heavenly loftiness and height of my spirit, discover my title to this promised land ? Shall I be the adopted son of God, and co-heir with Christ of that blessed inheritance and daily look when I am to be put into possession ; and shall not this be seen in my joyful countenance ? What if God had made me commander of the earth ? What if the mountains would remove at my command ? What if I could heal all diseases with a word or a touch ? What if the infernal spirits were all at my command ? Should I not rejoice in such privileges and honours as these ? Yet is it my Saviour's command, not to rejoice because the devils are subject to us ; but because our names are written in heaven.

I cannot here enjoy my parents, or my near and beloved friends without some delight. When I freely let out my affections to them, how sweet is that very exercise of love ! O what will it then be to live in the perpetual love of God ? For brethren here to dwell together in unity, how good and pleasant a thing is it ! To see a family live in love,—husbands, wife, parents, children, servants, doing all in love to one another : to see a town live together in love, without any envyings, brawlings, heart-burnings, contentions, scorns, law-suits, factions or divisions, but every man loving his neighbour as himself, and thinking they can never do too much for one another ; but striving to go beyond each other in love, O how happy and delectable a sight is this ! O what a blessed society will be the family of heaven ! what a happy community the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, where there is no division, no differing judgments, no disaffection, no strangeness, no deceitful friendship, never an angry thought or look, never a cutting unkind expression, but all are one in Christ, and live together in harmony and love ! Ah wretched, fleshly unbelieving heart ! that can think of such a day, and work, and life as this, with so low, and dull, and feeble joys !

How delectable is it to me to behold and study the inferior works of God! What a beautiful fabric is this great house in which we here dwell! The floor so drest with various herbs, and flowers, and trees, and watered with springs, and rivers, and seas! The roof so wide expanded, so admirably adorned, such astonishing workmanship in every part! O then what a dwelling must that needs be, which he prepares for pure, refined, spiritual, glorified beings, and which he will bestow only upon his own children! As far as our perfected glorified bodies will excel this frail corruptible flesh, so far will the glory of the New Jerusalem exceed all the present glory of the creatures. The change upon our mansion, will be proportionable to the change upon ourselves. Arise then, O my soul, by these steps, in thy contemplation; and let thy thoughts of that glory exceed as far in sweetness thy thoughts of the excellencies below.

How delightful is it to my soul, to review the working of Providence for myself, to read over the records and catalogues of those special mercies where-with my life has been adorned and sweetened! How often have my prayers been heard, and my tears regarded, and my groaning, troubled soul relieved, and my Lord has bid me, "Be of good cheer!" He has healed me when, in respect of means, I was incurable. He has helped me, when I was helpless. In the midst of my supplications, has he eased and revived me: he has taken me up from my knees, and from the dust where I have lain in sorrow and despair; even the cries which have been occasioned by distrust has he regarded. What a support are these experiences to my fearful unbelieving heart! These testimonies of my Father's love, do put life into my afflicted drooping spirit! O then, what a blessed day will that be, when I shall have all mercy, perfection of mercy, nothing but mercy! When I shall stand on the shore, and look back upon the raging seas which I have safely passed; when I shall in full possession of glory, take a retrospect of all my pains and troubles, and fears and tears, and shall behold the



glory there enjoyed, which was the end of all these trials,—O what a blessed view will that be! O glorious prospect which I shall have from the celestial mount Zion! If one drop of lively faith were even now mixed with these considerations, O what work would they make in my breast! what a heaven-ravished heart would I carry within me! Fain would I believe: “Lord, help my unbelief.”

Consider further, O my soul, how sweet have the ordinances been to thee! What raptures hast thou had in prayer and under heavenly sermons! What joys in days of thanksgiving, after eminent deliverances to the church, or to thyself! What delight do I find in the society of the saints! To be among my humble faithful neighbours and friends; to join with them in the frequent worship of God; to see their growth and stability and soundness of understanding; to see those daily added to the church who shall be saved; what high delight does this afford me! How glad have I been to go up to the house of God! Especially after long confinement by sickness, when I have been released and admitted to join with the people of God in their solemn assemblies, and to set forth the praises of my great Deliverer! How sweet is my work in preaching the gospel, and inviting sinners to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and opening to them the treasures of Divine grace! Especially when God blesses my endeavours with plenteous success, and gives me to see the fruit of my labours! This alone has been a greater joy to my heart, than if I had been made the lord of all the riches of this earth. O then how can my heart conceive that joy, which I shall have on my admittance into the celestial temple and into the heavenly host, that shall do nothing but praise the Lord for ever!—when we shall say to Christ, Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me; and when Christ shall present us all to his Father, and the church shall be all gathered, and perfected! How far would I go to see one of those blessed angels, which appeared to Abraham, to Lot, to John; or to speak with Enoch,

or Elijah, or any saint who had lived with God,—especially if he would resolve all my doubts, and describe to me the celestial habitations! How much more desirable must it needs be to live with these blessed saints and angels, and to see and possess as well as they! It is written of Erastus, that he was so desirous to learn, that it would have been sweet to him even to die, if he might thereby but be resolved of those doubtful questions wherein he could not satisfy himself. How sweet then should it be to me to die, that I may not only be resolved of all my doubts, but also know what before I never did think of, and enjoy what before I never knew! It was a happy dwelling that the apostles had with Christ; to be always in his company, to see his face, and hear him open to them the mysteries of the kingdom. But it will be another kind of happiness to dwell with him in glory.

Rouse up thyself, O my soul, and consider; can the foresight of this glory make others embrace the stake, and kiss the faggot, and welcome the cross, and refuse deliverance? And shall it not make thee cheerful under less sufferings? Can it sweeten the flames to them? And shall it not sweeten thy life, or thy sickness, or thy natural death? If a glimpse of it could make Moses' face to shine, and Peter on the mount so transported, and Paul so exalted, and John so wrapt up in the Spirit, why should it not somewhat revive me with delight? Doubtless it would, if my thoughts were more believing. Is it not the same heaven in which they and I must live? Is not their God, their Christ, their crown, and mine the same? Nay, how many a poor despised Christian have I seen, mean in parts, but rich in faith, who could rejoice and triumph in hope of this inheritance!

Consider also, O my soul, what a beauty there is in the imperfect graces of the Spirit here! So great are they, that they are called the image of God: and can any created excellency have a more honourable title? And yet how small a part are these of what we shall enjoy in our perfect state! O how precious a mercy

would I esteem it, if God would but take away my bodily infirmities, and restore me to some comfortable measure of health and strength, that I might be able with cheerfulness, to go through his work. How precious a mercy then will it be, to have all my corruptions removed, and my soul perfected, and my body also raised to so high a state, as I now can neither desire nor conceive! Surely as health of body, so health of soul, carries an inexpressible sweetness along with it. Were there no reward besides, yet every gracious act is a reward and comfort. Never had I the least stirring of love to God, but I felt a heavenly sweetness accompanying it: the very act of loving was inexpressibly sweet. What a happy life would I here live, could I but love as much as I would, and as often, and as long as I would! Could I be all love, and always loving! O my soul, what wouldst thou give for such a life! O my soul, what a blessed state wilt thou shortly be in, when thou shalt have far more of these than thou canst now desire; and shalt exercise all thy perfected graces upon God in his immediate presence and in open vision, and not as now in the dark, and at a distance!

But, alas, what a loss am I at in the midst of my contemplations! I thought my heart had all this while followed these meditations, but I see it does not. And shall I let my understanding go on alone? or my tongue run on without affections? What life is in empty thoughts and words? Neither God nor I find pleasure in them.

Rather let me turn back, and chide this lazy loitering heart, that turns off from such a pleasant work as this. Where hast thou been, unworthy heart, while I was opening to thee the everlasting treasures? Didst thou sleep, or wast thou minding something else; or dost thou think that all this is but a fable or a dream, as uncertain as the predictions of some presumptuous astrologer? Art thou not ashamed to complain so much of an uncomfortable life, and to murmur at God for filling thee with sorrows, when he offers thee in vain the delights of angels, and when

thou treadest under foot these transcendent pleasures? Thou wilfully pinest away in grief, and art ready to charge thy Father with unkindness for making thee only a vessel of displeasure, a channel for the waters of affliction to run in, when, in the meantime, thou mightest live a life of joy. Hadst thou now but followed me closely, and applied thyself by faith to that which I have spoken, and drunk in but half the comfort which it holds forth, it would have made thee revive and leap for joy, and forget thy sorrows, and diseases, and pains; but seeing thou judgest thyself unworthy of comfort, it is but just that comfort should be taken from thee.

Lord, what is the matter that this work goes on so heavily? Did I think my heart had been so backward to rejoice? If it had been to mourn, and fear, and despair, it were no wonder. I have been lifting at this stone, and it will not stir; I have been pouring the water of life into the mouth of the dead. I hope, Lord, by the time I come to heaven, this heart will be quickened by thy Spirit, or else even the joys of Paradise will scarce rejoice me.

But besides my darkness, deadness, and unbelief, I perceive there is something else that forbids my full desired joys. This is not the time and place where so much is given: the time is our winter, not our harvest: the place is called the valley of tears. There must be great difference between the way and the end, the work and the wages, the foretastes and the full fruition.



## SECTION V.

### *Actings of Desire.*

BUT, Lord, though thou hast reserved our joys for heaven, yet hast thou not so suspended our desires. They are most suitable and seasonable in the present life. O help me, therefore, to desire till I may

possess, and let me long, when I cannot, as I would, rejoice. There is love in desire, as well as in delight; and if I be not empty of love, I know I shall not long be empty of delight.

Rouse up thyself once more then, O my soul, and try and exercise thy spiritual appetite. Though thou art ignorant and unbelieving, yet art thou reasonable, and therefore must needs desire happiness and rest. Nor canst thou surely be so unreasonable as to dream of attaining them here on earth. Thou knowest to thy sorrow that thou art not yet at thy rest. Thy own feeling convinces thee of thy present unhappiness; and dost thou know that thou art restless, and yet art thou willing to continue so? Art thou happy neither in deed, nor in desire? Art thou neither well, nor wouldst be well? When my flesh is pained, and languishes under consuming sickness, how heartily and frequently do I cry out, "O when shall I be eased of this pain? when shall my decaying strength be recovered?" There is no dissembling or formality in these desires and groans. How then should I long for my final full recovery! "O when shall I arrive at that safe and quiet harbour, where there are no storms or dangers; where I shall never more have a weary restless night or day!" Then shall not my life be such a medley of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, as now it is; nor shall my soul be as a pitched field, where faith and unbelief, trust and distrust, humility and pride, maintain a continual distracting conflict. Then shall I not live a dying life for fear of dying, nor my life be made uncomfortable for the fear of losing it. O when shall I be past these soul tormenting cares, and griefs, and passions! When shall I be free of this frail, corruptible, ruinous body! When shall I be delivered from this vain, vexatious, ensnaring world, whose pleasures are delusive dreams and shadows, but whose miseries are numerous, substantial, and incessant! How long shall I see the church of Christ lie trodden under the feet of persecutors; or else as a ship in the hands of foolish guides, though the supreme Master does moderate and overrule all

for the best. Alas, that I must stand by and see the church and cause of Christ, like a foot-ball in the midst of a crowd of boys, tossed about in contention from one to another; every one running and sweating with foolish violence, and labouring the downfall of all that are in his way, and all to get it into his own power, that he may have the managing of the work himself, and may drive it before him which way he pleases; and when all is done, the best usage it may expect from them, is but to be spurned about in the dirt, till they have driven it on to the goal of their private interests, or deluded fancies! There is none of this disorder in the heavenly world. There I shall find a government without imperfection, and obedience without the least unwillingness or rebellion, even an harmonious consent of perfected spirits, in obeying and praising their everlasting King. O how much better is it to be a door-keeper there, or the least in that kingdom, than to be the conqueror or commander of this tumultuous world! There will our Lord govern more immediately by himself, and not put the reins into the hands of such ignorant riders, nor govern by such foolish and sinful deputies, as the best of the sons of men now are. How long hast thou desired to be a member of a more perfectly reformed church, and to join with more holy, humble, sincere souls, in the purest and most heavenly worship! Why, dost thou not see that on earth thy desires fly from thee? Art thou not as a child that thinks to travel to the sun, when he sees it rising or setting, as if it were close to the earth; but as he travels towards it, it seems to go from him; and when he has long wearied himself, it is as far off as ever; for the thing he seeks is in another world? Even such has been thy labour in seeking for so holy, so pure, so peaceable a society, as might afford thee a contented settlement here. When wars and calamities attending them have been over, I have said, Return now unto thy rest, O my soul. But how restless a condition has next succeeded! When God had given me the enjoyment of peace, and friends, and liberty

of the gospel; and had settled me even as my own heart desired, I have been ready to say, "Soul, take thy ease and rest." But how quickly has Providence called me fool, and taught me to call my state by another name! When did I ever begin to congratulate my flesh on its felicity, but God did quickly change my tune, and made almost the same breath to end in groaning, which had begun in laughter? I have often thought, in the folly of my prosperity, "Now I will have one sweet draught of solace and content." But God has dropped in the gall, while the cup was at my mouth. We are ever weary of our present condition, and desire a change; and when we have it, it does not answer our expectation, but our discontent and restlessness are still unchanged. In time of peace, we thought that war would deliver us from our disquietments; and when we saw the iron red-hot, we caught it inconsiderately, thinking that it was gold, till it burned us to the very bone, and so stuck to our fingers, that we scarce know yet whether we are rid of it or not. In this our misery, we longed for peace; and so long were we strangers to it, that we had forgotten its name, and began to call it REST, or HEAVEN. But as soon as we again grow acquainted with it, we shall bethink ourselves, and perceive our mistake. O why am I then no more weary of this weariness, and why do I forget my resting place? Up, O my soul, in thy most elevated and fervent desires! Stay not till this flesh can rise in desire with thee; its appetite has a lower and baser object, and therefore look not that sense apprehend thy blessed object, and tell thee what and when to desire it. But though sense apprehend not that which must draw thy desires, yet that which may drive them, it does easily apprehend. It can tell thee that thy present life is filled with distress and sorrows, though it cannot tell thee what is in the world to come. Thou needest not Scripture to tell thee, nor faith to discern, that thy head aches, and thy stomach is sick, thy bowels griped, and thy heart grieved; and some of these, or such like, are thy daily case. Thy friends

about thee are grieved to see thy griefs, and to hear thy dolorous groans and lamentations; and yet art thou loath to leave this woful life! Is this a state to be preferred before the celestial glory; or is it better to be thus miserable from Christ, than to be happy with him!\*

O my soul, does not the dulness of thy desires after rest accuse thee of ingratitude and folly? Must thy Lord procure thee rest at so dear a rate, and dost thou no more value it? Must he purchase thy rest by a life of labour and sorrow, and by the pangs of a bitter and accursed death; and when all is done, hadst thou rather be here without it? Must he go before to prepare so blessed a mansion for such a worm, and art thou now loath to go to possess it? Must his blood, and care, and pains be all lost? O unthankful, unworthy soul! shall the Lord of glory be desirous of thy company, and art thou undesirous of his? Are they fit to dwell with God, that had rather stay from him? Must he crown thee and glorify thee against thy will? Or must he yet deal more roughly with thy darling flesh, and leave thee not a corner in thy ruinous cottage to cover thee? Must every sense be an inlet to thy sorrows, and every friend become thy scourge, and every messenger be the intelligencer of thy multiplied calamities, before that heaven will seem more desirable than this earth? Must every joint be the seat of pain, and every member deny thee rest, and thy groans be indited from thy very

\* "The things of this world do nothing delight me, nor any temporal kingdom. It is better for me to die in Jesus Christ, than to reign in the ends of the earth. For I desire after the Lord, the Son of the true God, and the Father of Jesus Christ. Him I seek, and him that died and rose for us. Spare me, brethren, hinder me not from life; for Jesus is the life of the faithful. Do not wish me to die; for life, without Christ, is death. Being resolved to be God's, I may not please the world. Suffer me to behold the pure light. When I come thither, I shall be a man of God. Let me alone that I may be an imitator of the sufferings of my God. He that would have him in himself, let him know what I would have, and suffer with me, as knowing what is in me," says *Ignatius in Epist. ad Roman. edit. Usserii*, p. 87.



heart and bones before thou wilt be willing to leave this flesh? Must thy heavy burdens be bound upon thy back, and thy intolerable paroxysms become incessant? Yea, must earth become a very hell to thee before thou wilt be willing to be with God? O ungrateful soul, what is loathing, if this be love? Look about thee, O my soul; behold the most lovely creature, or the most desirable state, and tell me, where wouldst thou be, if not with God? Poverty is a burden, and riches a snare. Sickness is little pleasing to thee, and usually health is little safe; the one is full of sorrow, the other of sin. The frowning world bruises thy heel; and the smiling world stings thee to the heart. So much as the world is loved and delighted in, so much it hurts and endangers him who loves it; and if it may not be loved, why should it be desired?

Awake, then, O my drowsy soul, and look above this world of sorrow! Hast thou borne the yoke of afflictions from thy youth, and so long felt the smarting rod, and yet canst thou no better understand its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive thee hence? and is not the voice of the rod like that to Elisha, "What dost thou here?" Dost thou forget the prediction of thy Lord, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace?" The first thou hast found true by long experience: and of the latter thou hast a small foretaste; but the perfect peace is yet before thee, and till it be enjoyed, it cannot be clearly understood.

The blessed souls of David, Paul, Augustine, Calvin, with all the spirits of the just made perfect, were once on earth, as I now am, as far from the sight of thy face and glory, as deep in sorrows, as weak, as sick, and full of pains as I. Their souls were long imprisoned in corruptible flesh, as well as mine. I shall go but the way which they all went before me; their house of clay fell to dust and so must mine. The world they now are in, was as strange to them before they were there, as it is to me. And am I better than all these precious souls? I am, therefore, contented,

O my Lord, to stay thy time, and go thy way, so thou wilt exalt me also in thy season. In the mean time, I may desire, though I am not to repine; I may look over the hedge, though I may not break over; I may believe and wish, though not make any sinful haste; I am content to wait, but not to lose thee. And when thou seest me too contented with thine absence, and satisfying and pleasing myself here below, O quicken up my dull desires, and blow up the dying spark of love; and leave me not till I am able unfeignedly to cry out, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" Dispel the clouds that hide from me thy love, or remove the scales that hinder mine eyes from beholding thee; for only the beams that stream from thy face, and the foresight or taste of thy great salvation, can make a soul unfeignedly to say, "Now let thy servant depart in peace." Reading and hearing will not serve: my food is not sweet to my eye or my ear; it must be taste or feeling that must entice away my soul. Though arguing is the means to bend my will, yet if, by the influences of the Spirit, thou make it not effectual, I shall never reason my soul to be willing to depart. In the winter, when it is cold and dirty without, I am loath to leave my chamber and fire; but in the summer, when all is warm and green, I am loath to be confined. Show me but the summer fruits and pleasures of thy paradise, and I will freely quit my earthly cell. Some pleasure I have in my books, my friends, and in thine ordinances: till thou hast given me a taste of something more sweet, my soul will be loath to part with these. The traveller will hold his cloak the closer when the winds do bluster, and the storms assault him; but when the sun shines hot, he will cast it off as a burden; so will my soul, when thou frownest, or art strange, be more loath to leave this garment of flesh; but thy smiles will make me leave it as my prison. But it is not thy ordinary discoveries that will here suffice; as the work is greater, so must be thy help.

O turn these fears into strong desires, and this loathness to die, into longings after thee! While I must be absent from thee, let my soul as heartily groan under thine absence, as my pained body doth under its want of health: and let not these groans be counterfeit or constrained, but let them come from a longing, loving heart, unfeignedly judging it best to depart and be with Christ: and if I have any more time to spend on earth, let me live without the world in thee, as I have some time lived without thee in the world. O suffer me not to spend, at a distance from thee, another day of this my pilgrimage! While I have a thought to think, let me not forget thee; while I have a tongue to move, let me not cease to speak of thee with delight; while I have a breath to breathe, let me breathe after thee; while I have a knee to bend, let it bow daily at thy footstool; and when by sickness thou confinest me to my couch, do thou make my bed, and number my pains, and put all my tears into thy bottle. And as when my spirit groaned for my sins, the flesh would not second it, but desired that which my spirit did abhor; so now, when my flesh does groan under its pains, let not my spirit second it, but suffer the flesh to groan alone, and let me desire that day which my flesh abhorreth, that my friends may not with so much sorrow wait for the departure of my soul, as my soul with joy shall wait for its own departure; and then let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be as his, even a removal to that glory which shall never end. Send forth thy convoy of angels for my departed soul, and let them convey it among the perfect spirits of the just; and when my friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit be at rest with thee, and when my corpse shall lie there rotting in the dark, let my soul be in the inheritance of the saints in light. And O thou that numberest the very hairs of my head, do thou number all the days that my body shall lie in the dust; and thou that writest all my members in thy book, do thou keep an account of all my scattered bones; and hasten, O my Saviour, the time of thy return; send forth thine angels,

and let that dreadful joyful trumpet sound. Delay not, lest the living give up their hopes. Delay not, lest earth should grow like hell, and lest thy church by division be crumbled all to dust, and dissolved by being resolved into individual units. Delay not, lest thine enemies get advantage of thy flock, and lest pride and hypocrisy, and sensuality, and unbelief should prevail against thy little remnant, and share among them thy whole inheritance, and when thou comest thou find not faith on the earth. Delay not, lest the grave should boast of victory; and having learned rebellion of its guest, should plead prescription, and refuse to deliver thee up thy due. O hasten the great resurrection day! when thy command shall go forth, and none shall disobey;—when the earth and sea shall yield up their hostages, and all that sleep in the grave shall awake;—when the seed that thou sowest corruptible shall come forth incorruptible; and graves that received but rottenness, and retained but dust, shall return thee glorious stars and suns. Therefore do I lay down my carcase in the dust, entrusting it, not to the grave, but to thee; therefore my flesh shall rest in hope, till thou raise it to the possession of the everlasting rest.

Return, O Lord, how long! O let thy kingdom come! Thy desolate bride says, Come. Thy Spirit within her says, Come, who teaches her thus to pray with groanings after thee, which cannot be uttered. The whole creation says, Come, waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Thou thyself hast said, Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.

## CONCLUSION.

THUS I have given thee my best advice for the attainment and maintenance of an heavenly conversation. The manner is imperfect, and too much mine own; but for the main matter, I venture to say, I received it from God. From him I deliver it to thee, and his charge I lay upon thee, that thou entertain and practise it. If thou canst not do it methodically and fully, yet do it as thou canst;—only be sure thou do it seriously and frequently. If thou wilt believe a man that has made some small trial of it, thou wilt find it will make thee another man. It will elevate thy soul, and clear thy understanding, and polish thy conversation, and leave a pleasant savour upon thy heart; so that thy own experience will make thee confess, that one hour thus spent will more effectually revive thee, than many employed in bare external duties; and a day spent in these contemplations will afford thee more happiness than all the glory and riches of the earth. Be acquainted with this work, and thou wilt in some degree, be acquainted with God. Thy joys will be spiritual, and prevalent, and lasting, according to the nature of their blessed object. Thou wilt have comfort in life and comfort in death. When thou hast neither wealth nor health, nor the pleasures of this world, yet wilt thou have comfort, comfort without the presence or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book. When all means are denied thee, or taken from thee, yet mayest thou have vigorous, substantial comfort. Thy graces will be mighty, and active, and victorious; and the daily joy which is thus brought from heaven will be thy strength. Thou wilt be as one that stands on the top of an exceeding high mountain: he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him.

How small do the fields, and woods, and countries appear to him ! Cities and towns seem but little spots. Thus wilt thou look on all things here below. The greatest princes will appear to thee but as grasshoppers ; and the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as a heap of ants. Men's threatenings will be no terror to thee ; nor the honours of this world any enticement. Temptations will be more harmless, as having lost their strength, and afflictions less grievous, as having lost their sting ; while on the other hand, every mercy will be better known and better relished.

Reader, it is under God in thine own choice now, whether thou wilt live this blessed life or not ; and whether all this pains which I have taken for thee, shall prosper or be lost. O man ! What hast thou to mind but God and heaven ? Art thou not almost out of this world already ? Dost thou not look every day, when one disease or other will send away thy soul ? Does not the bier stand ready to carry thee to the grave ? O where, then, should thy heart be now but in heaven ? Didst thou but know what a dreadful thing it is to have a strange and doubtful thought of heaven when a man lies dying, it would surely rouse thee up. And what other thought but strange can that man have, who never, till then, thought seriously of heaven ? Every man's first thoughts are strange about all things. Familiarity and acquaintance come not in a moment, but are the consequence of custom and frequent converse : and strangeness naturally raises dread, as familiarity does delight. Alas, how little do many godly persons differ from the world, either in their comforts or their willingness to die ! And all because they live so strange to the place and fountain of their comforts. Except by a little verbal, or other outside duties, or talking of controversies and doctrines of religion, or forbearing the practice of some sins, how little do the most of the religious world differ from other men, when God hath prepared so vast a difference hereafter ! If a word of heaven fall in now and then in their conference,

alas, how slight is it, and customary, and heartless! And if their prayers or preaching have heavenly expressions, they usually are fetched from their mere invention, or memory, or books, and not from the experience or feeling of their hearts. O what a life might men live, if they were but willing and diligent! God would have our joys to be far more than our sorrows; yea, he would have us to have no sorrow, but what tendeth to joy; and no more than our sins have made necessary for our good. How much do those Christians wrong God and themselves, that either make their thoughts of God the inlet of their sorrows, or let these offered joys lie by, neglected or forgotten!

My Christian friends, I have here lined you out a heavenly precious work: would you but do it, it would make you happy indeed. To delight in God, is the work of angels, and the contrary is the work of devils. If God would persuadé you now to make conscience of this duty, and help you in it by the blessed influence of his Spirit, you would not change your lives with the greatest prince on earth. But I am afraid, if I may judge of your hearts by the backwardness of my own, that it will prove a hard thing to persuade you to the work, and that much of my labour will be lost. Pardon my jealousy: it is raised upon too many and sad experiments. What say you? Do you resolve on this heavenly course or no? Will you let go all your sinful fleshly pleasures, and daily seek after these higher delights? I pray thee, reader, here shut the book, and consider of it; and resolve on the duty before thou go further.

Let thy family perceive, let thy neighbours perceive, let thy conscience perceive, yea, let God perceive it, that thou art a man who hast thy daily conversation in heaven. God hath now offered to be thy daily delight; and wilt thou neglect or refuse it. What! refuse delight! and especially such delight! If I had proposed to you a course of melancholy and fear, and sorrow, you might have demurred about it. But take heed what thou dost; refuse this, and you refuse all. Thou must have heavenly delights, or none that are

lasting. God is willing that thou shouldst daily walk with him, and draw consolation from the everlasting fountain. If thou be unwilling, even bear thy loss; and one of these days, when thou shalt lie dying, seek for comfort where thou canst get it, and make what shift thou canst for happiness. Then thou wilt see whether thy fleshly delights will stick to thee or give thee the slip: and conscience will make thee remember, that thou wast once persuaded to more excellent pleasures, that would have followed thee through death, and have lasted thee through eternity. What man will go in rags, that may be clothed in the best? or feed on pulse, that may feed on the best? or accompany with the vilest, that may be a companion of the best, and admitted into the presence, and favour of the greatest? And shall we delight so much in our clothing of flesh, and feed so much on the vain pleasures of earth, and accompany so much with sin and sinners, when heaven is set open, as it were, to our daily view, and God doth daily offer us admittance? O how is the unseen God neglected—and the unseen glory forgotten,—and all for want of that faith, which is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!”

As for you, sincere believers, whose hearts God has weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and take one walk daily in the New Jerusalem! I know God is the object of your love, and desire; I know you would fain be more acquainted with your Saviour; I know it is your grief that your hearts are not more near him, and that they do no more freely and passionately love him and delight in him. As ever you would have all this corrected, O try this life of meditation on your everlasting rest! O let the world see by your heavenly lives, that religion lies in something more than opinions and disputes, and a round of outward duties; let men see in you what a life they must aim at. If ever a Christian be like himself, and correspondent to his principles and profession, it is when he is most serious, and lively in this duty.



As Moses before he died, went up into Mount Nebo, to take a survey of the land of Canaan, so the Christian ascends the mount of Contemplation, and takes a survey by faith of his everlasting rest. He looks upon the glorious delectable mansions, and says, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God." He hears, as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and is so transported that he is ready to fall down with the four-and-twenty elders, and to worship him that liveth for ever and ever, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." He looks on the glorified Saviour, and is ready to say, Amen, to that new song, "Worthy is the Lamb, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign for ever and ever." Thus as the lark sings most sweetly, and never ceases her pleasant ditty, while she hovers aloft as if she were there gazing on the glory of the sun, but is suddenly silenced when she falls to the earth,—so is the frame of the soul most delectable and divine, while by contemplation it keeps in the views of God; but alas, we make there too short a stay; down again we fall, and lay by our music.

But, O thou, the merciful Father of spirits, the attractive of love, the ocean of delights, draw up these hearts unto thyself, and keep them there, till they are spiritualized and refined; and second these thy servant's weak endeavours, and persuade those that read these lines, to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work. And, O suffer not the soul of thy most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he unfolds to thy people, or to be seldom in that way which he has described to others; but O keep me while I tarry on this earth, in daily serious breathings after thee, and in a believing, affectionate walking with thee. And when thou comest, O let me be found so doing, not hiding my talent, nor serving my flesh, nor yet asleep with my lamp unfurnished,

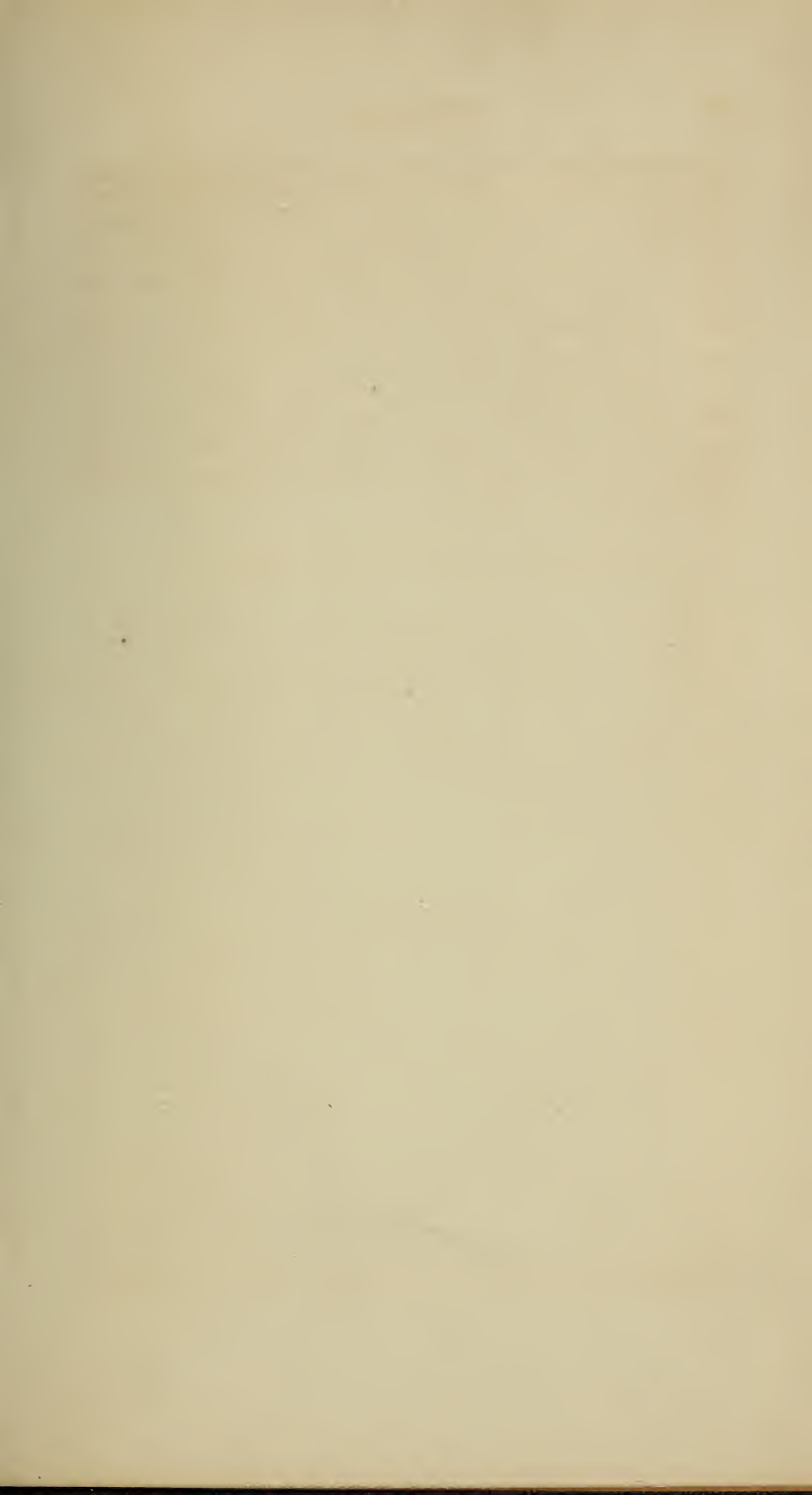
but waiting and longing for my Lord's return,—that those who shall read these heavenly directions, may reap not only the fruit of my studies, but the breathings of my active faith, and hope and love, that if my heart were opened to their view, they might there read the same most deeply engraven, as with a beam from the face of the Son of God, and not find vanity, or lust, or pride within, where the words of life appear without, that so these lines may not witness against me, but, proceeding from the heart of the writer, may be effectual through thy grace upon the heart of the reader, and so be to both the savour of life unto life. Amen.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST;

ON EARTH PEACE;

GOOD-WILL TOWARDS MEN.

THE END.







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